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VOL. IV.

CONTAINING

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SERMONS

ON

VARIOUS IMPORTANT SUBJECTS.

SERMONS

ON VARIOUS

IMPORTANT SUBJECTS.

SERMON I.

THE IMPORTANCE AND ADVANTAGE OF A THOROUGH KNOWLEDGE OF DIVINE TRUTH

HEBREWS v. 12.—For when, for the time, ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

THESE words are a complaint, which the apostle makes of a certain defect in the Christian Hebrews, to whon he wrote. Wherein we may observe,

1. What the defect complained of is, viz., a want of such a proficiency in the knowledge of the doctrines and mysteries of religion, as might have been expected of them. The apostle complains of them, that they had not made that progress in their acquaintance with the things of divinity or things taught in the oracles of God, which they ought to have made. And he means to reprove them, not merely for their deficiency in *spiritual* and *experimental* knowledge of divine things, but for their deficiency in a *doctrinal* acquaintance with the principles of religion, and the truths of Christian divinity; as is evident by several things.

It appears by the manner in which the apostle introduces this complaint or reproof. The occasion of his introducing it, is this: in the next verse but one preceding, he mentions Christ's being a high priest after the order of Melchizedek: "Called of God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek." This Melchizedek being in the Old Testament, which was the oracles of God, held forth as an eminent type of Christ, and the account we there have of Melchizedek containing many gospel mysteries, these the apostle was willing to point out to the Christian Hebrews. But he apprehended, that through their weakness in knowledge, and little acquaintance in mysteries of that nature, they would not understand him; and therefore breaks off for the present from saying any thing about Melchizedek. Thus, in verse 11, "Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered; seeing ye are dull of hearing;" i. e., there are many things concerning Melchizedek, which contain wonderful gospel mysteries, and which I would take notice of to you, were it not that I am afraid, that through your dulness and backwardness in understanding these things, you would only be puzzled and confounded by my discourse, and so receive no benefit; and that it would be too hard for you, as meat that is too strong.

* Dated November, 1739.

Then come in the words of the text: "For when, for the time, ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat." As much as to say, Indeed it might have been expected of you, that you should have known enough of divinity, and the holy Scriptures, to be able to understand and digest such mysteries: but it is not so with you.

Again, The apostle speaks of their proficiency in such knowledge as is conveyed and received by *human* teaching; as appears by that expression, "When for the time ye ought to be teachers;" which includes not only a practical and experimental, but also a doctrinal knowledge of the truths and mysteries of religion.

Again, The apostle speaks of such a knowledge, whereby Christians are enabled to digest strong meat; i. e., to understand those things in divinity which are more abstruse and difficult to be understood, and which require great skill in things of this nature. This is more fully expressed in the two next verses: for every one that useth milk, is unskilful in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who, by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

Again, It is such a knowledge, that proficiency in it shall carry persons beyond the first principles of religion. As here: "Ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God." Therefore the apostle, in the beginning of the next chapter, advises them, "to leave the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, and to go on unto perfection."

2. We may observe wherein the fault of this defect appears, viz., in that they had not made proficiency according to their time. For the time, they ought to have been teachers. As they were Christians, their business was to learn and gain Christian knowledge. They were scholars in the school of Christ; and if they had improved their time in learning, as they ought to have done, they might, by the time when the apostle wrote, have been fit to be teachers in this school. To whatever business any one is devoted, it may be expected that his perfection in it shall be answerable to the time he has had to learn and perfect himself.—Christians should not always remain babes, but should grow in Christian knowledge; and, leaving the food of babes, which is milk, should learn to digest strong meat.

DOCTRINE:

Every Christian should make a business of endeavoring to grow in knowledge in divinity.

This is indeed esteemed the business of divines and ministers: it is commonly thought to be their work, by the study of the Scriptures, and other instructive books, to gain knowledge; and most seem to think that it may be left to them, as what belongeth not to others. But if the apostle had entertained this notion, he would never have blamed the Christian Hebrews for not having acquired knowledge enough to be teachers: or if he had thought, that this concerned Christians in general, only as a thing by the by, and that their time should not, in a considerable measure, be taken up with this business; he never would have so much blamed them, that their proficiency in knowledge had not been answerable to the time which they had had to learn.

In handling this subject, I shall show,

1. What divinity is

2. What kind of knowledge in divinity is intended in the doctrine.

3 Why knowledge in divinity is necessary.

4. Why all Christians should make a business of endeavoring to grow in this knowledge.

First, I shall very briefly show what divinity is.

Various definitions have been given of it by those who have treated on the subject. I shall not now stand to inquire which, according to the rules of art, is the most accurate definition; but shall so define or describe it, as I think has the greatest tendency to convey a notion of it to this auditory.

By divinity is meant, that science or doctrine which comprehends all those truths and rules which concern the great business of religion. There are various kinds of arts and sciences taught and learned in the schools, which are conversant about various objects; about the works of nature in general, as philosophy; or the visible heavens, as astronomy; or the sea, as navigation; or the earth, as geography; or the body of man, as physic and anatomy; or the soul of man, with regard to its natural powers and qualities, as logic and pneumatology; or about human government, as politics and jurisprudence. But there is one science, or one certain kind of knowledge and doctrine, which is above all the rest, as it is concerning God and the great business of religion: *this is divinity;* which is not learned, as other sciences, merely by the improvement of man's natural reason, but is taught by God himself in a certain book that he hath given for that end, full of instruction. This is the rule which God hath given to the world to be their guide in searching after this kind of knowledge, and is a summary of all things of this nature needful for us to know. Upon this account divinity is rather called a doctrine, than an art or science.

Indeed there is what is called *natural religion* or *divinity*. There are many truths concerning God, and our duty to him, which are evident by the light of nature. But Christian divinity, properly so called, is not evident by the light of nature; it depends on revelation. Such are our circumstances now in our fallen state, that nothing which it is needful for us to know concerning God, is manifest by the light of nature in the manner in which it is necessary for us to know it. For the knowledge of no truth in divinity is of any significance to us, any otherwise than, as it some way or other belongs to the gospel scheme, or as it relates to a Mediator. But the light of nature teaches us no truth of divinity in this matter. Therefore it cannot be said, that we come to the knowledge of any part of Christian divinity by the light of nature. The light of nature teaches no truth as it is in Jesus. It is only the word of God, contained in the Old and New Testament, which teaches us Christian divinity.

Divinity comprehends all that is taught in the Scriptures, and so all that we need know, or is to be known, concerning God and Jesus Christ, concerning our duty to God, and our happiness in God. Divinity is commonly defined, *the doctrine of living to God;* and by some who seem to be more accurate, *the doctrine of living to God by Christ.* It comprehends all Christian doctrines as they are in Jesus, and all Christian rules directing us in living to God by Christ There is nothing in divinity, no one doctrine, no promise, no rule, but what some way or other relates to the Christian and divine life, or our living to God by Christ. They all relate to this, in two respects, viz., as they tend to promote our living to God here in this world, in a life of faith and holiness, and also as they tend to bring us to a life of perfect holiness and happiness, in the full enjoyment of God hereafter.—But I hasten to the

Second thing proposed, viz., To show what kind of knowledge in divinity is intended in the doctrine.

Here I would observe:

1. That there are two kinds of knowledge of the things of divinity, viz., *speculative* and *practical*, or in other terms, *natural* and *spiritual*. The former remains only in the head. No other faculty but the understanding is concerned in it. It consists in having a natural or rational knowledge of the things of religion, or such a knowledge as is to be obtained by the natural exercise of our own faculties, without any special illumination of the Spirit of God. The latter rests not entirely in the head, or in the speculative ideas of things; but the heart is concerned in it: it principally consists in the sense of the heart. The mere intellect, without the heart, the will or the inclination, is not the seat of it. And it may not only be called seeing, but feeling or tasting. Thus there is a difference between having a right speculative notion of the doctrines contained in the word of God, and having a due sense of them in the heart. In the former consists speculative or natural knowledge of the things of divinity; in the latter consists the spiritual or practical knowledge of them.

2. Neither of these is intended in the doctrine exclusively of the other: but it is intended that we should seek the former in order to the latter. The latter, even a spiritual and practical knowledge of divinity, is of the greatest importance; for a speculative knowledge of it, without a spiritual knowledge, is in vain and to no purpose, but to make our condemnation the greater. Yet a speculative knowledge is also of infinite importance in this respect, that without it we can have no spiritual or practical knowledge; as may be shown by and by.

I have already shown, that the apostle speaks not only of a spiritual knowledge, but of such knowledge as can be acquired, and communicated from one to another. Yet it is not to be thought, that he means this exclusively of the other. But he would have the Christian Hebrews seek the one, in order to the other. Therefore the former is first and most directly intended; it is intended that Christians should, by reading and other proper means, seek a good rational knowledge of the things of divinity. The latter is more indirectly intended, since it is to be sought by the other, as its end.—But I proceed to the

Third thing proposed, viz., To show the usefulness and necessity of knowledge in divinity.

1. There is no other way by which any means of grace whatsoever can be of any benefit, but by knowledge. All teaching is in vain, without learning Therefore the preaching of the gospel would be wholly to no purpose, if it conveyed no knowledge to the mind. There is an order of men whom Christ has appointed on purpose to be teachers in his church. They are to teach the things of divinity. But they teach in vain, if no knowledge in these things is gained by their teaching. It is impossible that their teaching and preaching should be a means of grace, or of any good in the hearts of their hearers, any otherwise than by knowledge imparted to the understanding Otherwise it would be of as much benefit to the auditory, if the minister should preach in some unknown tongue. All the difference is, that preaching in a known tongue conveys something to the understanding, which preaching in an unknown tongue doth not. On this account, such preaching must be unprofitable. Men in such things receive nothing, when they understand nothing; and are not at all edified, unless some knowledge be conveyed; agreeably to the apostle's arguing in 1 Cor. xiv. 2—6.

No speech can be any means of grace, but by conveying knowledge. Otherwise the speech is as much lost as if there had been no man there, and he that spoke, had spoken only into the air; as it follows in the passage just quoted,

verses 6—10. He that doth not understand, can receive no faith, nor any other grace; for God deals with man as with a rational creature; and when faith is in exercise, it is not about something he knows not what. Therefore hearing is absolutely necessary to faith; because hearing is necessary to understanding: Rom. x. 14, "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?"

So there can be no love without knowledge. It is not according to the nature of the human soul, to love an object which is entirely unknown. The heart cannot be set upon an object of which there is no idea in the understanding. The reasons which induce the soul to love, must first be understood, before they can have a reasonable influence on the heart.

God hath given us the Bible, which is a book of instructions. But this book can be of no manner of profit to us, any otherwise than as it conveys some knowledge to the mind: it can profit us no more than if it were written in the Chinese or Tartarian language, of which we know not one word.

So the sacraments of the gospel can have a proper effect no other way, than by conveying some knowledge. They represent certain things by visible signs. And what is the end of signs, but to convey some knowledge of the things signified? Such is the nature of man, that nothing can come at the heart, but through the door of the understanding: and there can be no spiritual knowledge of that of which there is not first a rational knowledge. It is impossible that any one should see the truth or excellency of any doctrine of the gospel, who knows not what that doctrine is. A man cannot see the wonderful excellency and love of Christ in doing such and such things for sinners, unless his understanding be first informed how those things were done. He cannot have a taste of the sweetness and divine excellency of such and such things contained in divinity, unless he first have a notion that there are such and such things.

2. Without knowledge in divinity, none would differ from the most ignorant and barbarous heathens. The heathens remain in gross heathenish darkness, because they are not instructed, and have not obtained the knowledge of the truths of divinity. So if we live under the preaching of the gospel, this will make us to differ from them, only by conveying to us more knowledge of the things of divinity.

3. If a man have no knowledge of these things, the faculty of reason in him will be wholly in vain. The faculty of reason and understanding was given for actual understanding and knowledge. If a man have no actual knowledge, the faculty or capacity of knowing is of no use to him. And if he have actual knowledge, yet if he be destitute of the knowledge of those things which are the last end of his being, and for the sake of the knowledge of which he had more understanding given him than the beasts; then still his faculty of reason is in vain; he might as well have been a beast, as a man with this knowledge. But the things of divinity are the things to know which we had the faculty of reason given us. They are the things which appertain to the end of our being, and to the great business for which we are made. Therefore a man cannot have his faculty of understanding to any purpose, any further than he hath knowledge of the things of divinity.

So that this kind of knowledge is absolutely necessary. Other kinds of knowledge may be very useful. Some other sciences, such as astronomy, and natural philosophy, and geography, may be very excellent in their kind. But the knowledge of this divine science is infinitely more useful and important than that of all other sciences whatever.

I come now to the fourth, and principal thing proposed under the doctrine, viz., To give the reasons why all Christians should make a busi-

ness of endeavoring to grow in the knowledge of divinity This implies two things.

1. That Christians ought not to content themselves with such degrees of knowledge in divinity as they have already obtained. It should not satisfy them, that they know as much as is absolutely necessary to salvation, but should seek to make progress.

2. That this endeavoring to make progress in such knowledge ought not to be attended to as a thing by the by, but all Christians should make a business of it: they should look upon it as a part of their daily business, and no small part of it neither. It should be attended to as a considerable part of the work of their high calling. The reason of both these may appear in the following things.

(1.) Our business should doubtless much consist in employing those faculties, by which we are distinguished from the beasts, about those things which are the main end of those faculties. The reason why we have faculties superior to those of the brutes given us, is, that we are indeed designed for a superior employment. That which the Creator intended should be our main employment, is something above what he intended the beasts for, and therefore hath given us superior powers. Therefore, without doubt, it should be a considerable part of our business to improve those superior faculties. But the faculty by which we are chiefly distinguished from the brutes, is the faculty of understanding. It follows then, that we should make it our chief business to improve this faculty, and should by no means prosecute it as a business by the by. For us to make the improvement of this faculty a business by the by, is in effect for us to make the faculty of understanding itself a by faculty, if I may so speak, a faculty of less importance than others; whereas indeed it is the highest faculty we have.

But we cannot make a business of the improvement of our intellectual faculty, any otherwise than by making a business of improving ourselves in actual understanding and knowledge. So that those who make not this very much their business, but, instead of improving their understanding to acquire knowledge, are chiefly devoted to their inferior powers, to provide wherewithal to please their senses, and gratify their animal appetites, and so rather make their understanding a servant to their inferior powers, than their inferior powers servants to their understanding; not only behave themselves in a manner not becoming Christians, but also act as if they had forgotten that they are men, and that God hath set them above the brutes, by giving them understanding.

God hath given to man some things in common with the brutes, as his outward senses, his bodily appetites, a capacity of bodily pleasure and pain, and other animal faculties: and some things he hath given him superior to the brutes, the chief of which is a faculty of understanding and reason. Now God never gave man those faculties whereby he is above the brutes, to be subject to those which he hath in common with the brutes. This would be great confusion, and equivalent to making man to be a servant to the beasts. On the contrary, he has given those inferior powers to be employed in subserviency to man's understanding; and therefore it must be a great part of man's principal business, to improve his understanding by acquiring knowledge. If so, then it will follow, that it should be a main part of his business to improve his understanding in acquiring divine knowledge, or the knowledge of the things of divinity; for the knowledge of these things is the principal end of this faculty. God gave man the faculty of understanding, chiefly, that he might understand divine things.

The wiser heathens were sensible that the main business of man was the

improvement and exercise of his understanding. But they were in the dark, as they knew not the object about which the understanding should chiefly be employed. That science which many of them thought should chiefly employ the understanding, was philosophy; and accordingly they made it their chief business to study it. But we who enjoy the light of the gospel are more happy; we are not left, as to this particular, in the dark. God hath told us about what things we should chiefly employ our understandings, having given us a book full of divine instructions, holding forth many glorious objects about which all rational creatures should chiefly employ their understandings. These instructions are accommodated to persons of all capacities and conditions, and proper to be studied, not only by men of learning, but by persons of every character, learned and unlearned, young and old, men and women. Therefore the acquisition of knowledge in these things should be a main business of all those who have the advantage of enjoying the Holy Scriptures.

(2.) The things of divinity are things of superlative excellency, and are worthy that all should make a business of endeavoring to grow in the knowledge of them. There are no things so worthy to be known as these things. They are as much above those things which are treated of in other sciences, as heaven is above the earth. God himself, the eternal Three in one, is the chief object of this science: in the next place, Jesus Christ, as Godman and Mediator, and the glorious work of redemption, the most glorious work that ever was wrought: then the great things of the heavenly world, the glorious and eternal inheritance purchased by Christ, and promised in the gospel; the work of the Holy Spirit of God on the hearts of men; our duty to God, and the way in which we ourselves may become like angels, and like God himself in our measure: all these are objects of this science.

Such things as these have been the main subject of the study of the holy patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, and the most excellent men that ever were in the world, and are also the subject of the study of the angels in heaven; 1 Pet. i. 10, 11, 12.

These things are so excellent and worthy to be known, that the knowledge of them will richly pay for all the pains and labor of an earnest seeking of it. If there were a great treasure of gold and pearls hid in the earth, but should accidentally be found, and should be opened among us with such circumstances that all might have as much as they could gather of it; would not every one think it worth his while to make a business of gathering it while it should last? But that treasure of divine knowledge, which is contained in the Scriptures, and is provided for every one to gather to himself as much of it as he can, is a far more rich treasure than any one of gold and pearls. How busy are all sorts of men, all over the world, in getting riches! But this knowledge is a far better kind of riches, than that after which they so diligently and laboriously pursue.

3. The things of divinity not only concern ministers, but are of infinite importance to all Christians. It is not with the doctrines of divinity as it is with the doctrines of philosophy and other sciences. These last are generally speculative points, which are of little concern in human life; and it very little alters the case as to our temporal or spiritual interests, whether we know them or not. Philosophers differ about them, some being of one opinion, and others of another. And while they are engaged in warm disputes about them, others may well leave them to dispute among themselves, without troubling their heads much about them; it being of little concern to them, whether the one or the other be in the right.

But it is not thus in matters of divinity. The doctrines of this nearly concern every one. They are about those things which relate to every man's eternal salvation and happiness. The common people cannot say, Let us leave these matters to ministers and divines; let them dispute them out among themselves as they can; they concern not us: for they are of infinite importance to every man. Those doctrines of divinity which relate to the essence, attributes, and subsistencies of God, concern all; as it is of infinite importance to common people, as well as to ministers, to know what kind of being God is. For he is the Being who hath made us all, "in whom we live, and move, and have our being;" who is the Lord of all; the Being to whom we are all accountable; is the last end of our being, and the only fountain of our happiness.

The doctrines also which relate to Jesus Christ and his mediation, his incarnation, his life and death, his resurrection and ascension, his sitting at the right hand of the Father, his satisfaction and intercession, infinitely concern common people as well as divines. They stand in as much need of this Saviour, and of an interest in his person and offices, and the things which he hath done and suffered, as ministers and divines.

The same may be said of the doctrines which relate to the manner of a sinner's justification, or the way in which he becomes interested in the mediation of Christ. They equally concern all; for all stand in equal necessity of justification before God. That eternal condemnation, to which we are all naturally exposed, is equally dreadful. So with respect to those doctrines of divinity, which relate to the work of the Spirit of God on the heart, in the application of redemption in our effectual calling and sanctification, all are equally concerned in them. There is no doctrine of divinity whatever, which doth not some way or other concern the eternal interest of every Christian. None of the things which God hath taught us in his word are needless speculations, or trivial matters; all of them are indeed important points.

4. We may argue from the great things which God hath done in order to give us instruction in these things. As to other sciences, he hath left us to ourselves, to the light of our own reason. But the things of divinity being of infinitely greater importance to us, he hath not left us to an uncertain guide; but hath himself given us a revelation of the truth in these matters, and hath done very great things to convey and confirm to us this revelation; raising up many prophets in different ages, immediately inspiring them with his Holy Spirit, and confirming their doctrine with innumerable miracles or wonderful works out of the established course of nature. Yea, he raised up a succession of prophets, which was upheld for several ages.

It was very much for this end that God separated the people of Israel, in so wonderful a manner, from all other people, and kept them separate; that to them he might commit the oracles of God, and that from them they might be communicated to the world. He hath also often sent angels to bring divine instructions to men; and hath often himself appeared to men in miraculous symbols or representations of his presence; and now in these last days hath sent his own Son into the world, to be his great prophet, to teach us divinity; Heb. i at the beginning. By means of all, God hath given a book of divine instructions, which contains the sum of divinity. Now, these things hath God done, not only for the instruction of ministers and men of learning; but for the instruction of all men, of all sorts, learned and unlearned, men, women, and children. And certainly if God doth such great things to *teach* us, we ought not to do little to *learn*.

God hath not made giving instructions to men in things of divinity a busi-

ness by the by; but a business which he hath undertaken and prosecuted in a course of great and wonderful dispensations, as an affair in which his heart hath been greatly engaged; which is sometimes in Scripture signified by the expression of God's rising early to teach us, and to send prophets and teachers to us. Jer. vii. 25, "Since that day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt, unto this day, I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them." And so, verse 13, "I spake unto you, rising up early, and speaking." This is a figurative speech, signifying, that God hath not done this as a by business, but as a business of great importance, in which he took great care, and had his heart much engaged; because persons are wont to rise early to prosecute such business as they are earnestly engaged in.—If God hath been so engaged in teaching, certainly we should not be negligent in learning; nor should we make growing in knowledge a by business, but a great part of the business of our lives.

5. It may be argued from the abundance of the instructions which God hath given us, from the largeness of that book which God hath given to teach us divinity, and from the great variety that is therein contained. Much was taught by Moses of old, which we have transmitted down to us; after that, other books were from time to time added; much is taught us by David and Solomon; and many and excellent are the instructions communicated by the prophets: yet God did not think all this enough, but after this sent Christ and his apostles, by whom there is added a great and excellent treasure to that holy book, which is to be our rule in the study of divinity.

This book was written for the use of all; all are directed to search the Scriptures. John v. 39, "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they that testify of me;" and Isaiah xxxiv. 16, "Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read." They that read and understand are pronounced blessed. Rev. i. 3, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that understand the words of this prophecy." If this be true of that particular book of the *Revelation*, much more is it true of the Bible in general. Nor is it to be believed that God would have given instructions in such abundance, if he had intended that receiving instruction should be only a by concernment with us.

It is to be considered, that all those abundant instructions which are contained in the Scriptures were written for that end, that they might be understood; otherwise they are not instructions. That which is not given that the learner may understand it, is not given for the learner's instruction; and unless we endeavor to grow in the knowledge of divinity, a very great part of those instructions will to us be in vain; for we can receive benefit by no more of the Scriptures than we understand, no more than if they were locked up in an unknown tongue. We have reason to bless God that he hath given us such various and plentiful instruction in his word; but we shall be hypocritical in so doing, if we, after all, content ourselves with but little of this instruction.

When God hath opened a very large treasure before us, for the supply of our wants, and we thank him that he hath given us so much; if at the same time we be willing to remain destitute of the greatest part of it, because we are too lazy to gather it, this will not show the sincerity of our thankfulness. We are now under much greater advantages to acquire knowledge in divinity, than the people of God were of old, because since that time, the canon of Scripture is much increased. But if we be negligent of our advantages, we may be never the better for them, and may remain with as little knowledge as they.

6. However diligently we apply ourselves, there is room enough to increase our knowledge in divinity, without coming to an end. None have this excuse

to make for not diligently applying themselves to gain knowledge in divinity, that they know all already; nor can they make this excuse, that they have no need diligently to apply themselves, in order to know all that is to be known. None can excuse themselves for want of business in which to employ themselves. Here is room enough to employ ourselves forever in this divine science, with the utmost application. Those who have applied themselves most closely, have studied the longest, and have made the greatest attainments in this knowledge, know but little of what is to be known. The subject is inexhaustible. That divine Being, who is the main subject of this science, is infinite, and there is no end to the glory of his perfections. His works at the same time are wonderful, and cannot be found out to perfection; especially the work of redemption, which is that work of God about which the science of divinity is chiefly conversant, is full of unsearchable wonders.

The word of God, which is given for our instruction in divinity, contains enough in it to employ us to the end of our lives, and then we shall leave enough uninvestigated to employ the heads of the ablest divines to the end of the world. The Psalmist found an end to the things that are human; but he could never find an end to what is contained in the word of God; Psalm cxix. 96, "I have seen an end to all perfection; but thy commandment is exceeding broad." There is enough in this divine science to employ the understandings of saints and angels to all eternity.

7. It doubtless concerns every one to endeavor to excel in the knowledge of things which pertain to his profession or principal calling. If it concerns men to excel in any thing, or in any wisdom or knowledge at all, it certainly concerns them to excel in the affairs of their main profession and work. But the calling and work of every Christian is to live to God. This is said to be his *high calling*, Phil. iii. 14. This is the business, and, if I may so speak, the *trade* of a Christian, his main work, and indeed should be his only work. No business should be done by a Christian, but as it is some way or other a part of this. Therefore certainly the Christian should endeavor to be well acquainted with those things which belong to this work, that he may fulfil it, and be thoroughly furnished to it.

It becomes one who is called to be a soldier, and to go a warfare, to endeavor to excel in the art of war. It becomes one who is called to be a mariner, and to spend his life in sailing the ocean, to endeavor to excel in the art of navigation. It becomes one who professes to be a physician, and devotes himself to that work, to endeavor to excel in the knowledge of those things which pertain to the art of physic. So it becomes all such as profess to be Christians, and to devote themselves to the practice of Christianity, to endeavor to excel in the knowledge of divinity.

8. It may be argued from this, that God hath appointed an order of men for this end, to assist persons in gaining knowledge in these things. He hath appointed them to be teachers. 1 Cor. xii. 28, "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers." Eph. iv. 11, 12, "He gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." If God hath set them to be teachers, making that their business, then he hath made it their business to impart knowledge. But what kind of knowledge? Not the knowledge of philosophy, or of human laws, or of mechanical arts, but of divinity.

If God hath made it the business of some to be teachers, it will follow, that

he hath made it the business of others to be learners; for teachers and learners are correlates, one of which was never intended to be without the other. God hath never made it the duty of some to take pains to teach those who are not obliged to take pains to learn. He hath not commanded ministers to spend themselves, in order to impart knowledge to those who are not obliged to apply themselves to receive it.

The name by which Christians are commonly called in the New Testament is *disciples*, the signification of which word is *scholars* or *learners*. All Christians are put into the school of Christ, where their business is to learn, or receive knowledge from Christ, their common master and teacher, and from those inferior teachers appointed by him to instruct in his name.

9. God hath in the Scriptures plainly revealed it to be his will, that all Christians should diligently endeavor to excel in the knowledge of divine things. It is the revealed will of God, that Christians should not only have some knowledge of things of this nature, but that they should be *enriched with all knowledge:* 1 Cor. i. 4, 5, "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God that is given you by Jesus Christ, that in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge." So the apostle earnestly prayed, that the Christian Philippians might abound more and more, not only in love, but in Christian knowledge: Philip. i. 9, "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment." So the Apostle Peter advises to "give all diligence, to add to faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge," 2 Pet. i. 5. And the Apostle Paul, in the next chapter to that wherein is the text, counsels the Christian Hebrews, leaving the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, to go on to perfection. He would by no means have them always to rest only in those fundamental doctrines of repentance, and faith, and the resurrection from the dead, and the eternal judgment, in which they were indoctrinated when they were first baptized, and had the apostle's hands laid on them, at their first initiation in Christianity. See Heb. vi., at the beginning.

APPLICATION.

The use that I would make of this doctrine is, to exhort all diligently to endeavor to gain this kind of knowledge.

Consider yourselves as scholars or disciples, put into the school of Christ, and therefore be diligent to make proficiency in Christian knowledge. Content not yourselves with this, that you have been taught your catechism in your childhood, and that you know as much of the principles of religion as is necessary to salvation. So you will be guilty of what the apostle warns against, viz., going no further than laying the foundation of repentance from dead works, &c.

You are all called to be Christians, and this is your profession. Endeavor, therefore, to acquire knowledge in things which pertain to your profession.—Let not your teachers have cause to complain, that while they spend and are spent, to impart knowledge to you, you take little pains to learn. It is a great encouragement to an instructor, to have such to teach as make a business of learning, bending their minds to it. This makes teaching a pleasure, when otherwise it will be a very heavy and burdensome task.

You all have by you a large treasure of divine knowledge, in that you have the Bible in your hands; therefore be not contented in possessing but little of

this treasure. God hath spoken much to you in the Scripture; labor to understand as much of what he saith as you can. God hath made you all reasonable creatures; therefore let not the noble faculty of reason or understanding lie neglected. Content not yourselves with having so much knowledge as is thrown in your way, and as you receive in some sense unavoidably by the frequent inculcation of divine truth in the preaching of the word, of which you are obliged to be hearers, or as you accidentally gain in conversation; but let it be very much your business to search for it, and that with the same diligence and labor with which men are wont to dig in mines of silver and gold.

Especially I would advise those that are young to employ themselves in this way. Men are never too old to learn; but the time of youth is especially the time for learning; it is especially proper for gaining and storing up knowledge. Further, to stir up all, both old and young, to this duty, let me entreat you to consider,

1. If you apply yourselves diligently to this work, you will not want employment, when you are at leisure from your common secular business. In this way, you may find something in which you may profitably employ yourselves these long winter evenings. You will find something else to do, besides going about from house to house, spending one hour after another in unprofitable conversation, or, at best, to no other purpose but to amuse yourselves, to fill up and wear away your time. And it is to be feared that very much of the time that is spent in our winter evening visits, is spent to a much worse purpose than that which I have now mentioned. Solomon tells us, Prov. x. 19, "That in the multitude of words, there wanteth not sin." And is not this verified in those who find nothing else to do for so great a part of the winter, but to go to one another's houses, and spend the time in such talk as comes next, or such as any one's present disposition happens to suggest?

Some diversion is doubtless lawful; but for Christians to spend so much of their time, so many long evenings, in no other conversation than that which tends to divert and amuse, if nothing worse, is a sinful way of spending time, and tends to poverty of soul at least, if not to outward poverty: Prov. xiv. 23, "In all labor there is profit; but the talk of the lips tendeth only to *penury*." Besides, when persons for so much of their time have nothing else to do but to sit, and talk, and chat in one another's chimney corners, there is great danger of falling into foolish and sinful conversation, venting their corrupt dispositions, in talking against others, expressing their jealousies and evil surmises concerning their neighbors; not considering what Christ hath said, Matt. xii. 36, "Of every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account in the day of judgment."

If you would comply with what you have heard from this doctrine, you would find something else to spend your winters in, one winter after another, besides contention, or talking about those public affairs which tend to contention. Young people might find something else to do, besides spending their time in vain company; something that would be much more profitable to themselves, as it would really turn to some good account; something, in doing which they would both be more out of the devil's way, the way of temptation, and be more in the way of duty, and of a divine blessing. And even aged people would have something to employ themselves in after they are become incapable of bodily labor. Their time, as is now often the case, would not lie heavy upon their hands, as they would, with both profit and pleasure, be engaged in searching the Scriptures, and in comparing and meditating upon the various truths which they should find there.

2. This would be a noble way of spending your time. The Holy Spirit gives the Bereans this epithet, because they diligently employed themselves in this business: Acts xvii. 11, "These were more *noble* that those of Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so." This is very much the employment of heaven. The inhabitants of that world spend much of their time in searching into the great things of divinity, and endeavoring to acquire knowledge in them, as we are told of the angels, 1 Pet. i. 12, "Which things the angels desire to look into." This will be very agreeable to what you hope will be your business to all eternity, as you doubtless hope to join in the same employment with the angels of light. Solomon says, Prov. xxv. 2, "It is the honor of kings to search out a matter;" and certainly, above all others, to search out divine matters. Now if this be the honor even of kings, is it not equally, if not much more, your honor?

3. This is a pleasant way of improving time. Knowledge is pleasant and delightful to intelligent creatures, and above all the knowledge of divine things; for in them are the most excellent truths, and the most beautiful and amiable objects held forth to view. However tedious the labor necessarily attending this business may be, yet the knowledge once obtained will richly requite the pains taken to obtain it. "When wisdom entereth the heart, knowledge is pleasant to the soul," Prov. ii. 10.

4. This knowledge is exceeding useful in Christian practice. Such as have much knowledge in divinity have great means and advantages for spiritual and saving knowledge; for no means of grace, as was said before, have their effect on the heart, otherwise than by the knowledge they impart. The more you have of a rational knowledge of the things of the gospel, the more opportunity will there be, when the Spirit shall be breathed into your heart, to see the excellency of these things, and to taste the sweetness of them. The Heathens, who have no rational knowledge of the things of the gospel, have no opportunity to see the excellency of them; and therefore the more rational knowledge of these things you have, the more opportunity and advantage you have to see the divine excellency and glory of them.

Again, The more knowledge you have of divine things, the better will you know your duty; your knowledge will be of great use to direct you as to your duty in particular cases. You will also be the better furnished against the temptations of the devil. For the devil often takes the advantage of persons' ignorance to ply them with temptations which otherwise would have no hold of them.

By having much knowledge, you will be under greater advantages to conduct yourselves with prudence and discretion in your Christian course, and so to live much more to the honor of God and religion. Many who mean well, and are full of a good spirit, yet, for want of prudence, conduct themselves so as to wound religion. Many have a zeal of God, which doth more hurt than good, because it is not according to knowledge, Rom. x. 2. The reason why many good men behave no better in many instances, is not so much that they want grace, as that they want knowledge.

Besides, an increase of knowledge would be a great help to profitable conversation. It would supply you with matter for conversation when you come together, or when you visit your neighbors: and so you would have less temptation to spend the time in such conversation as tends to your own and others' hurt.

5. Consider the advantages you are under to grow in the knowledge of divinity. We are under far greater advantages to gain much knowledge in di-

vinity now, than God's people under the Old Testament, both because the canon of Scripture is so much enlarged since that time, and also because evangelical truths are now so much more plainly revealed. So that common men are now in some respects under advantages to know more of divinity, than the greatest prophets were then. Thus that saying of Christ is in a sense applicable to us, Luke x. 23, 24, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things which ye see. For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." We are in some respects under far greater advantages for gaining knowledge, now in these latter ages of the church, than Christians were formerly; especially by reason of the art of printing, of which God hath given us the benefit, whereby Bibles and other books of divinity are exceedingly multiplied, and persons may now be furnished with helps for the obtaining of Christian knowledge, at a much easier and cheaper rate than they formerly could.

6. We know not what opposition we may meet with in the principles which we hold in divinity. We know that there are many adversaries to the gospel and its truths. If therefore we embrace those truths, we must expect to be attacked by the said adversaries; and unless we be well informed concerning divine things, how shall we be able to defend ourselves? Besides, the Apostle Peter enjoins it upon us, always to be ready to give an answer to every man who asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us. But this we cannot expect to do without a considerable knowledge in divine things.

I shall now conclude my discourse with some *directions* for the acquisition of this knowledge

1. Be assiduous in reading the holy Scriptures. This is the fountain whence all knowledge in divinity must be derived. Therefore let not this treasure lie by you neglected. Every man of common understanding who can read, may, if he please, become well acquainted with the Scriptures. And what an excellent attainment would this be!

2. Content not yourselves with only a cursory reading, without regarding the sense. This is an ill way of reading, to which, however, many accustom themselves all their days. When you read, observe what you read. Observe how things come in. Take notice of the drift of the discourse, and compare one Scripture with another. For the Scripture, by the harmony of the different parts of it, casts great light upon itself. We are expressly directed by Christ to *search* the Scriptures, which evidently intends something more than a mere cursory reading. And use means to find out the meaning of the Scripture. When you have it explained in the preaching of the word, take notice of it; and if at any time a Scripture that you did not understand be cleared up to your satisfaction, mark it, lay it up, and if possible remember it.

3. Procure, and diligently use other books which may help you to grow in this knowledge. There are many excellent books extant, which might greatly forward you in this knowledge, and afford you a very profitable and pleasant entertainment in your leisure hours. There is doubtless a great defect in many, that through a lothness to be at a little expense, they furnish themselves with no more helps of this nature. They have a few books indeed, which now and then on Sabbath days they read; but they have had them so long, and read them so often, that they are weary of them, and it is now become a dull story, a mere task to read them.

4. Improve conversation with others to this end. How much might persons promote each other's knowledge in divine things, if they would improve

conversation as they might; if men that are ignorant were not ashamed to show their ignorance, and were willing to learn of others; if those that have knowledge would communicate it, without pride and ostentation; and if all were more disposed to enter on such conversation as would be for their mutual edification and instruction.

5. Seek not to grow in knowledge chiefly for the sake of applause, and to enable you to dispute with others; but seek it for the benefit of your souls, and in order to practice. If applause be your end, you will not be so likely to be led to the knowledge of the truth, but may justly, as often is the case of those who are proud of their knowledge, be led into error to your own perdition. This being your end, if you should obtain much rational knowledge, it would not be likely to be of any benefit to you, but would puff you up with pride: 1 Cor. viii. 1, "Knowledge puffeth up."

6. Seek to God, that he would direct you, and bless you, in this pursuit after knowledge. This is the apostle's direction, James i. 5: "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not." God is the fountain of all divine knowledge. Prov. ii. 6, "The Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding." Labor to be sensible of your own blindness and ignorance, and your need of the help of God, lest you be led into error, instead of true knowledge. 1 Cor. iii. 18, "If any man would be wise, let him become a fool, that he may be wise."

8. Practice according to what knowledge you have. This will be the way to know more. The Psalmist warmly recommends this way of seeking knowledge in divinity, from his own experience: Psal. cxix. 100, "I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts." Christ also recommends the same: John vii. 17, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

SERMON II.

MAN'S NATURAL BLINDNESS IN THE THINGS OF RELIGION.

PSALM xciv. 8—11.—Understand, ye brutish among the people: and ye fools, when will ye be wise? He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see? He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know? The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man that they are vanity.*

SECTION I.

Introductory Observations.

IN these words the following particulars are to be observed. (1.) A certain spiritual *disease* charged on *some* persons, viz., darkness, and *blindness* of mind, appearing in their ignorance and folly. (2.) The great *degree* of this disease: so as to render the subjects of it *fools*. *Ye fools, when will ye be wise?* And so as to reduce them to a degree of *brutishness*. *Ye brutish among the people.* This ignorance and folly were to such a degree, as to render men like beasts. (3.) The *obstinacy* of this disease: expressed in that interrogation, *When will ye be wise?* Their blindness and folly were not only very great; but deeply rooted and established, resisting all manner of cure. (4.) Of what *nature* this blindness is. It is especially in things pertaining to God. They were strangely *ignorant* of his perfections, like beasts: and had *foolish* notions of him, as though he did not see, nor know; and as though he would not execute justice, by chastising and punishing wicked men. (5.) The *unreasonableness* and *sottishness* of the notion they had of God, that he did not *hear*, did not *observe* their reproaches of him and his people, is shown by observing that he *planted* the ear. It is very *unreasonable* to suppose that he, who gave power of perceiving words to *others*, should not perceive them *himself*. And the *sottishness* of their being insensible of God's all-seeing eye, and particularly of his seeing their wicked actions, appears, in that God is the being who *formed* the eye, and gave others a *power* of seeing. The sottishness of their apprehension of God, as though he did not know what they did, is argued from his being the *fountain* and original of all knowledge. The unreasonableness of their expecting to escape God's just chastisements and judgments for sin, is set forth by his chastising even the *heathen*, who did not sin against that light, or against so great mercies, as the wicked in Israel did; nor had ever made such a profession as they. (6.) We may observe, that this dreadful disease is ascribed to *mankind in general*. *The Lord knoweth the thoughts of* MAN, *that they are vanity*. The psalmist had been setting forth the vanity and unreasonableness of the thoughts of *some* of the children of men; and immediately upon it he observes, that this vanity and foolishness of thought is *common* and *natural to mankind*.

* This Treatise is a *posthumous* work, collected from the author's papers. They were drawn up by him in the form of three short *sermons*, in his usual way of preparation for the pulpit; but were by no means finished in a manner fit for the public eye. It is presumed, therefore, that the present form is much more suitable to the nature of the subject, than that in which they appeared in the Glasgow edition '1785) of Eighteen Sermons, connected with the Author's Life, by Dr. Hopkins.

This plan has been occasionally adopted respecting some other *courses* of sermons, especially posthumous ones; which we have been encouraged to do by several judicious friends, who are well acquainted with the author's writings. And we own, it is no small inducement in our view, to edit them in this manner in a standard edition, they are much more likely to do good at a future period. A *tract* may be *reprinted* with much greater probability of acceptance and success, than the same in the form of sermons, unfinished by the author, with divisions, transitions, &c., to which the generality of readers are unaccustomed.—W.

From these particulars we may fairly deduce the following doctrinal observation: *that there is an extreme and brutish blindness in things of religion, which naturally possesses the hearts of mankind.*—This doctrine is not to be understood as any reflection on the *capacity* of the human nature; for God hath made man with a noble and excellent capacity. The blindness I speak of, is not a merely *negative* ignorance; such as in trees and stones, that know nothing. They have no faculties of understanding and perception, whereby they should be capable of any knowledge. And inferior animals, though they have *sensitive* perception, are not capable of any *intellectual* views. There is no fault to be found with man's *natural* faculties. God has given men faculties truly noble and excellent; well capable of true wisdom and divine knowledge. Nor is the blindness I speak of like the ignorance of a new-born infant; which arises from want of necessary opportunity to exert these faculties.

The blindness that is in the heart of man, which is spoken of in the text and doctrine, is neither for want of *faculties* nor *opportunity* to know, but from some positive cause. There is a principle in his heart, of such a blinding and besotting nature, that it hinders the exercises of his *faculties* about the things of religion; exercises for which God has made him well capable, and for which he gives him abundant opportunity.

In order to make it appear, that such an extreme brutish blindness, with respect to the things of religion, does naturally possess the hearts of men, I shall show how this is manifest in those things that appear in men's open profession; and how it is manifest in those things that are found by inward experience, and are visible in men's practice.

SECTION II.

Man's natural blindness in Religion, manifested by those things which appear in men's open profession.

I would now show, how it is manifest that there is a sottish and brutish blindness in the hearts of men in the things of religion, by those things which appear in men's open profession.

1. It appears in the *grossness* of that ignorance and those delusions, which have appeared among mankind. Man has faculties given him whereby he is well capable of inferring the being of the Creator from the creatures. The invisible things of God are very plainly and clearly to be seen by the things that are made; and the perfections of the Divine Being, his eternal power and Godhead, are very manifest in the works of his hands. And yet grossly absurd notions concerning the Godhead have prevailed in the world. Instead of acknowledging and worshipping the *true* God, they have fallen off to the worship of idols. Instead of acknowledging the *one* only true God, they have made a *multitude* of deities. Instead of worshipping a God, who is an almighty, infinite, all-wise, and Holy Spirit, they have worshipped the hosts of heaven, the sun, moon, and stars; and the works of their own hands, images of gold and silver, brass and iron, wood and stone; gods that can neither hear, nor see, nor walk, nor speak, nor do, nor know any thing. Some in the shape of men, others in the shape of oxen and calves; some in the shape of serpents, others of fishes, &c.

The sottishness of men in thus worshipping the lifeless images which they themselves have made, is elegantly and forcibly represented by the prophet Isaiah. "The smith with the tongs both worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with the strength of his arms. Yea, he is

hungry, and his strength faileth; he drinketh no water, and is faint. The carpenter stretcheth out his rule; he marketh it out with a line: he fitteth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compass, and maketh it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man, that it may remain in the house. He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest; he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish it. Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof and warm himself; yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth it: he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto. He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh: he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth himself, and saith. Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire. And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me, for thou art my god. They have not known, nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see, and their hearts, that they cannot understand. And none considereth in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire, yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten it, and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? Shall I fall down to the stock of a tree?" Isa. xliv. 12—19.

Many of the images which the heathen worshipped were made in the most *monstrous* and *terrible* shapes they could devise; and the more hideous and frightful they appeared, the better they supposed they would serve their turn for gods. Some of their images were made so as to be the most *unclean* representations; images of men openly exposing their nakedness. These unclean images, they judged, appeared in a god-like manner, and worthy to be worshipped. Many, instead of worshipping a holy and good God, and infinitely perfect Being, ascribed *vices* to many of the gods which they worshipped. One god they reckoned notorious for *drunkenness;* others notorious for *uncleanness:* to others they ascribed *lying* and *stealing;* to others *cruelty;* and yet looked upon them worthy to be worshipped as gods! Many worshipped *devils*, who appeared to them, and whom they themselves reckoned to be evil spirits; but yet built temples, and offered sacrifices to them, because they were afraid of them. Many worshipped *beasts* and *birds* and *fishes;* and the most hateful and loathsome animals were most worshipped; particularly, *serpents* were more commonly worshipped than any other beast. Many worshipped *rivers*, and *trees*, and *mountains*. They worshipped many *diseases*. There is scarcely any thing of which men have not made gods.

And so far has that principle of *blindness* prevailed, with respect to the things of religion, that it has in a great measure extinguished all light in the minds of many, even in matters of *morality*, and things that have but a distant relation to religion. So that many whole nations have professedly approved of many things directly contrary to the light of nature; and the most *horrid vices* and immoralities have been esteemed *harmless*, yea, accounted *virtues* among them; such as *revenge*, *cruelty*, and *incest*. Many nations have openly allowed the practice of *sodomy*. And with some it has been accounted commendable to marry their nearest relations. Many have even worshipped their gods in their temples with acts of *drunkenness* and *whoredom*, and the most abominable lewdness. And the more filthy they were in their uncleanness, they thought their gods the more pleased and delighted with it.

Many nations have been so under the influence of mental blindness, that they have been void of all *civility*, and have been reduced to a state very little

above the beasts in their common customs, and ordinary way of living; and in a great many things far below the beasts: being, if I may so speak, much more beastly than the beasts themselves. Now this has not been, because these men, with whom this has been the case, have not had the same *faculties* that we have. That we are not as ignorant as they, is not because we have better natural understandings, or that our minds are by nature more clear, and our eyes more discerning; or that our hearts are not naturally so inclined to sottishness and delusion as theirs. But only because God has not left us so much to ourselves, as he has them. He has given us more instruction to help us against our delusions. God has so ordered it in his providence, that we should have his good word to instruct us; and has caused that we should grow up from our infancy under Christian instruction.

2. The extreme blindness and sottishness in things of religion, which is naturally in the hearts of men, appears not only in embracing and professing those errors that are very great, but also those that are so *unnatural*. They have not only embraced errors which are very contrary to *truth*, but very contrary to *humanity;* not only against the light of nature, but against the more innocent inclinations of nature. Such has been, and still is, the blindness of many nations in the world, that they embrace those errors which do not only exclude all true virtue, all holy dispositions; but those that have swallowed up the more harmless inclinations of human nature.

Thus they have embraced many gross delusions, that are as contrary as possible to *natural affection*. Such as offering up their own children in sacrifice to their idol; which has been a common thing in the heathen world. And the parents have not only offered them up to *death*, but they have brought them, and offered them up to the most *cruel* and *tormenting* deaths: as, to be *burnt alive*, to be *broiled* to death in burning brass; which was the way of offering up children to Moloch. The image of the idol being made of brass, in a horrid shape, was heated red hot; and the poor child was laid naked in this burning brass, and so burned to death. And the *parents themselves* brought the child to this offering, however sweet and pleasant a child it might be. And thus the innocent child was tormented till it died, without any regard to its piteous cries. And it has been the manner of some nations, to offer in sacrifice the fairest and best beloved child that they had. And thus many thousands of poor babes have been offered up. So strong has been the tendency of the hearts of men to delusion, that it has thus overcome those strong natural affections which men have to the fruit of their own bodies.

And many of these delusions have been against men's natural love of their own ease, and aversion to pain. Many have worshipped their idols, and do so to this day, with such rites as are most painful and tormenting; cutting, gashing, and mangling their own flesh. Thus they sottishly worshipped Baal of old. "And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them," 1 Kings xviii. 28. And it is still the custom in some nations grievously to torment temselves: to kindle a fire and scorch their own bodies in a most miserable manner; and to put themselves to various and long-continued torments to please their idols. And it is the manner in some countries for persons, on certain occasions, to *kill* themselves; yea, to put themselves to *cruel* deaths; to cast themselves into great fires, and there burn themselves to death. How powerful must be the delusions of the human mind, and how strong the tendency of the heart to carry them such a length, and so to overcome the tenderest feelings of human nature!

3. The extreme blindness of the mind of man will appear further, if we

consider how *general* gross ignorance and delusion has been. It has for the most part prevailed through the greater part of the world. For most of the time from Noah's flood to the coming of Christ, all nations, except the children of Israel, were overspread with gross heathenish darkness: being given up to the most vain and ridiculous notions, and all manner of superstitious, barbarous, absurd, and unnatural practices. And, for the greater part of the time since, most nations of the world have been covered with gross darkness.

So it is at this day. Many nations are under *popish* darkness, and are in such gross delusions that they worship the Virgin Mary, and a great multitude of dead men, whom their church has canonized for saints; some real saints, and others abominably wicked men. So they worship the *bread* in the sacrament, and account it not only the real body of Christ, but real Christ in body and soul, and divinity. They carry a *wafer*, a small piece of bread, in procession, fall down before it, *adore* it, and account it Christ himself, both in his divine and human nature; and yet believe that the body of Christ is in heaven, and in ten thousand different places on earth at the same time. They think they can do works of *supererogation*; that is, *more* good works than they are *obliged* to do, whereby they bring God into debt to them. They whip themselves, and put themselves to other ridiculous penances and sufferings, whereby they think they appease the anger of God for their sins. And they pay money to the priests, to *buy* the pardon of their sins; yea, they buy indulgences for *future* crimes, or pardon for sins before they commit them. They think they defend themselves from evil spirits, by sprinkling holy water. They pay money to buy the souls of their departed friends out of purgatory; they worship the *relics* of dead saints; such as pieces of their bones, their teeth, their hair, pieces of their garments, and the like. And innumerable other such foolish delusions are they under.

A great part of the nations of the world are *Mahometans*; many of the articles of whose belief are too childish and ridiculous to be publicly mentioned in a solemn assembly.—But the greater part of the inhabitants of the world are to this day gross, barbarous *heathens*, who have not the knowledge of the true God, but worship *idols* and *devils*, with all manner of absurd and foolish rites and ceremonies; and are destitute of even common civility: multitudes of nations being like beasts in human shape.—Now this barbarous ignorance and gross delusion being of such great extent and continuance, shows that the cause is *general*, and that the defect is in the *corrupted nature* of mankind; man's natural blindness and proneness of his heart to delusion.

4. The sottish blindness and folly of the heart of men appears in their being so *prone* to fall into such gross delusions, *soon* after they have been favored with *clear* light. Were not the minds of men exceeding dark, they never would entertain such absurd notions at all; for they are as contrary as possible to reason: much less would they fall into them, after they had once been instructed in the truth. For, were it not very strange and great sottishness indeed, they would—when they come to be informed of the truth, and have opportunity to compare it with those gross errors – behold such a reasonableness in the truth, and such absurdity in those errors, that they would never be in danger of being deluded by them any more. But yet so it is; mankind after they have been *fully instructed*, and have lived in *clear light*, have, time after time, presently lost the knowledge of the truth, and have exchanged it for the most barbarous and brutish notions.

So it was early after the flood, whereby the wicked world, those that were visibly so, were destroyed; and none were left but those who professed the true

religion: and they had such an eminently holy man as Noah to instruct them. And though the true God had so wonderfully and astonishingly manifested himself in that great work of vengeance against his enemies; yet the posterity of Noah, in great part, presently lost the knowledge of the true God, and fell away to idolatry; and that even while Noah was living. And the ancestors of Abraham were tainted with that idolatry; even Terah his own father. "And Joshua said unto all the people, thus saith the Lord God of Israel, your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods. And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood," &c., Josh. xxiv. 2, 3, 4. It seems as though Abraham was called away from his father's house, and from his own country, for this reason, that the country was overrun with idolatry.

And even many of the posterity of *Abraham* and *Isaac*—Abraham's posterity by Hagar and Keturah, and that part of Isaac's posterity which were of Esau—though the true religion was so thoroughly taught and practised in the houses of those holy patriarchs, and God had from time to time so wonderfully and so miraculously manifested himself to them, yet—soon cast off the true God, and fell away to idolatry. For, not very long after, we read of the posterity of Jacob as being the *only* people of God, that he had in all the earth.—And so the people of that part of the land of Canaan, who were under that holy king Melchizedek, soon totally cast off the worship of the one only true God, which he taught and maintained. For before Joshua brought in the children of Israel, the inhabitants of that land were wholly given to idolatry. So the people of the land of Uz, who were under the government of so great and holy a man as Job, soon lost the knowledge of the true God, and all those religious truths which were then known among them, and sunk into gross idolatry.

So the posterity of *Jacob*, themselves—though God had manifested himself to them, and had wrought such wonders for them in the time of Jacob and Joseph, yet—presently fell to worship the gods of Egypt. This appears from the words of Joshua, "Put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood and in Egypt," Josh. xxiv. 14. And how soon did they fall to worship a golden calf in the wilderness, in the midst of the wonderful and miraculous manifestations of the one only true God! And notwithstanding idolatry was so strictly forbidden, and the folly and wickedness of it so clearly manifested, in the law of Moses and in God's providence; yet, how soon did they fall into idolatry after they were brought into the land of Canaan! And when God raised up eminent men, judges to instruct and govern them, and reclaim them from their idolatrous practices, from time to time; though they professed to be convinced of their foolish delusion, yet they would soon fall again into the most sottish idolatry. And this they did soon after such great light as they enjoyed in the time of Samuel, David, and Solomon; and so, from time to time, down to the Babylonish captivity.

And in the *apostles'* times, when such great things were done to rouse the attention of mankind, and such great light was spread over many nations, multitudes, after they had been instructed in the Christian religion by the apostles and others, fell away into the grossest heresies, and embraced the most corrupt and absurd notions.—After the Roman empire had been converted from heathenism to Christianity, and the light of the gospel had driven out the sottish ignorance and gross absurdities of pagan idolatry, in which they had continued so long; they soon began to fall away from the truth into *antichristian* superstition and idolatry, in which are opinions and practices no less absurd than those of the heathen. And a great part of the Christian world fell away to Mahometanism.

And since the *reformation*, wherein God wonderfully restored gospel light in a great part of the Christian world, which was but about two hundred years ago, many are fallen away again, some to *popery*, some to gross *heresies*, and some to *atheistical* principles: so that the reformed church is greatly diminished.—And as to our nation in particular, which has been a nation favored with light, since the reformation, above most, if not any in the world; how soon has it in great part fallen away! A great part of it to *atheism*, *deism*, and gross *infidelity*; and others to Arminianism, and to the Socinian and Arian heresies, to believe that Christ is a created dependent God; and to hold other foolish absurdities! And many have of late openly disputed and denied the moral evil of some of the greatest and most heinous vices.

These things show how desperately prone mankind are to blindness and delusion, how addicted they are to darkness.—God now and then, by his instructions, lifts up some nations out of such gross darkness: but then, how do they sink down into it again, as soon as his hand is withdrawn! like a heavy stone, which, though it may be forced upwards, yet sinks down again; and will continue to sink lower and lower with a swift progress, if there be nothing to restrain it. That is the woful tendency of the mind of man since the fall, notwithstanding his noble powers and faculties; even to sink down into a kind of brutality, to lose and extinguish all useful light, and to sink lower and lower into darkness.

5. The extreme and brutish blindness that possesses the hearts of men naturally, appears in their being so *confident* in gross errors and delusions. Some things mentioned already, show how confident and assured they are; particularly, their running such great ventures as offering up their children; and cutting and mangling themselves. Multitudes live and die in the most foolish and absurd notions and principles, and never seem to make any *doubt* of their being in the right.

The *Mahometans* seem to make no doubt but that, when they die, they shall go to such a paradise as Mahomet has promised them; where they shall live in all manner of sensual pleasures, and shall spend their time in gratifying the lusts of the flesh. Mahomet promised them, that all who die in war for the defence of the Mahometan religion, shall go to this paradise; and they make no doubt of it. Therefore, many of them, as it were, willingly rush on upon the point of the sword.

The *papists*, many of them at least, make no doubt of the truth of those foolish notions of a *purgatory*, and the power of the priests to deliver them out of it, and give them eternal life; and therefore will not spare vast sums of money to purchase deliverance from those imaginary torments. How confident are many *heretics* in the grossest heresies! and how bold are many *deists* in their infidelity!

6. The desperateness of that blindness which is in the heart of man, appears, in that no nation or people in the world ever have had any remedy or deliverance from such gross ignorance and delusion, from *themselves*. No instance can be mentioned of any people whatsoever, who have once fallen into heathenish darkness, or any other gross superstitious and ridiculous opinions in religion, that ever had any remedy by any wisdom of their *own*; or that have, of themselves, grown wiser by the improvement of their own faculties, and by instructing one another; or that ever had any remedy at all, by the teaching of any wise men, who did not professedly act as moved and directed of God; and did not declare, that they had their instructions, in the first place, from him

Thus in the *heathen* world Before Christ's time, the whole world, except

the Jews, lay in their darkness for a great many hundred years, even beyond all time of which they had any certain history among them. And there was no remedy, nor any appearance of a remedy; they continued, ages after ages, waxing worse and worse, sinking deeper and deeper. Among all the many nations in the world, no one ever bethought themselves, and emerged out of their brutish darkness. There were indeed some nations that emerged out of slavery, cast off the yoke of their enemies, grew great, and conquered great part of the world; but they never conquered the blindness of their own hearts.

There were some nations who excelled in other knowledge; as the Greeks and Romans. They excelled in policy, and in the form of their civil government. They had wise political rulers; they had excellent laws for regulating their civil state; many of which have been imitated, as a pattern, by many Christian nations ever since. They excelled many other nations in arts, government, and civility, almost as much as men in common do beasts. Yet they never could deliver themselves from their *heathenism*. Though they were so wise in other things, yet in matters of religion they were very absurd and brutish. For even the Greeks and Romans, in their most flourishing state, worshipped innumerable gods; and some to whom they ascribed great *vices*: and some they worshipped with most obscene and horrid rites. To some they offered *human* sacrifices. The Romans had a temple dedicated to the *furies*, which they worshipped. And they had a multitude of childish notions and fables about their gods.

And though there were raised up some wise men and philosophers among the Greeks and Romans, who borrowed some things concerning the true God from the Jews; yet their instructions never were effectual to deliver any one *people*, or even one *city* or *town*, from their barbarous heathenism, or so much as to get *any one society*, or company of men, to unite in the *public worship of the true God*. And these philosophers themselves had many grossly absurd opinions, mingled with those scraps of truth which they had gathered up.

And the *Jews*, when fallen away to idolatry, as they often did, never recovered of *themselves*. Never any remedy appeared, unless God raised up, and extraordinarily moved, some person to reprove and instruct them.—And in *this age* of knowledge, an age wherein learning is carried to a great height, even many learned men seem to be carried away with the gross errors and fooleries of the *popish* religion.

Europe is a part of the world the most famed for arts and sciences of any; and these things have been carried to a much greater height in this age than in many others: yet many learned men in Europe at this day, who greatly excel in human arts and literature, are still under popish darkness. A deceived heart has turned them aside; nor do they seem to have any power to deliver their souls; nor does it come into their minds, that there is a lie in their right hands.

Many men in *France* and in other countries, who are indeed men of great learning, knowledge, and abilities, yet seem really to think that the church of Rome is the only true church of Christ; and are zealous to uphold and propagate it. And though now, within this hundred years, human learning has been very much promoted, and has risen to a greater height than ever in the world; and has greatly increased not only in our nation, but in France and Italy, and other popish countries; yet there seems to be no such effect of it, as any considerable turning from popish delusions; but the church of Rome has rather increased of late, than otherwise.

And in *England*, a land wherein learning flourishes as much as in any in

the world, and which is perhaps the most favored with light of any; there are many men of vast learning, and great and strong reason, who have embraced, and do at this day embrace, the gross errors of the Arians and Deists. Our nation, in all its light and learning, is full of *infidels*, and those that are *further* from Christianity than the very Mahometans themselves. Of so little avail is human strength, or human reason and learning, as a remedy against the extreme blindness of the human mind. The blindness of the mind, or an inclination to delusion in things of religion, is so strong, that it will overcome the greatest learning, and the strongest natural reason.

Men, if let alone, will not help one another; nor will they help themselves The disease always proves without remedy, unless *God* delivers. This was observed of old: "And none considereth in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burnt part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten it: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?" Isa. xliv. 19, 20.

If God lets men alone, no light arises; but the darkness grows thicker and thicker. How is it now, at this very day, among all the nations where the light of the gospel has not come? Many of whose ancestors, without doubt, have been in the midnight darkness of heathenism for above three thousand years: and not one people have delivered themselves, who have not had the light of the gospel. And this is not owing to their want of as good *natural abilities* as we have; nor is it because they have an inclination more to neglect their natural abilities, or make a worse improvement of them than we.

7. The extreme blindness of man's heart, in matters of religion, appears, by men falling into gross delusions, or continuing in them, at the same time that they have been under *great means* of instruction from God. We have many instances of this; as Rachel in Jacob's family; and the Israelites in the wilderness, &c. These last had great means of instruction; yet they set up the golden calf, &c. And after Joshua's time, they persisted in their delusions and folly, from time to time, even under the reproofs of the prophets; and even in such horrid delusions, so contrary to natural affection, as offering their children in sacrifice to Moloch, burning them alive, in a most cruel manner.

In the time of Christ and the apostles, the Jews had great means of instruction, and most of the nations of the world were put under great advantages to come to the knowledge of the truth; yet what was the effect? It would be easy to pursue these remarks respecting the papists in the time of the reformation, and since—the Arians and Deists in our day, &c.—but what has been said may be quite sufficient, if the reader will but indulge reflection.

8. The exceedingly great blindness of men, in things of religion, appears in the endless *disputes* and controversies, that there have been, and are, among men, about those things which concern religion.—Of old, the wise men and philosophers among the *heathen*, were, so to speak, infinitely divided among themselves. Varro, who was one of them, reckons up several hundred opinions about that one point, *Wherein man's happiness consisted?* And they were continually in disputes one with another. But the effect of their disputes was not any greater union, or any better agreement in their opinions. They were as much divided after they had disputed many ages, as they were at first; yea, much more.

So there have long been disputes in the *Christian* world about opinions and

principles in religion. There is a vast variety of sects and opinions; and disputes have been carried on, age after age, with great warmth, and thousands of volumes have been written one against another. And all these disputes have not terminated the differences, but they still subsist as much as ever; yea, they increase and multiply more and more. Instead of ending controversies by disputing, one dispute only lays a foundation for another. And thus the world goes on jangling and contending, daily writing and printing; being as it were deluged with controversial books; and all to no purpose.

The increase of human learning does not bring these controversies to an issue, but does really increase and multiply them. There probably never was a time in our nation wherein there was such a vast variety of opinions in matters of religion, as at this day. Every now and then, a new scheme of things is broached, and various and contrary opinions are mixed and jumbled, divided and subdivided; and every new writer is willing to have the credit of some new notion.

And after this manner does this miserable world go on in endless confusion; like a great multitude of fool-hardy persons, who go on in the dark, stumbling and justling one against another, without perceiving any remedy for their own, or affording any for their neighbor's, calamity.—Thus I have shown how the extreme blindness that possesses the hearts of men is manifest in what appears in their *profession*.

SECTION III.

Men's extreme blindness manifested by inward experience, and especially in their practices under the gospel.

I come now to show, how this is manifest in those things that are found by inward experience, and are visible in men's *practices* under the light of the gospel.

1. This appears in their being so *prone to be deceived* so many ways, or being liable to such a *multiplicity* of deceits. There are thousands of delusions in things which concern the affairs of religion, that men commonly are led away with, who yet live under the light of the gospel.—They are many ways deceived about *God*. They think him to be an exceeding diverse kind of being from what he is; altogether such a one as themselves, Psal. l, 21. They are deceived about his *holiness*, they do not realize it, that he is such a holy being as he indeed is, or that he hates sin with such a hatred as he declares he does. They are not convinced of his *truth*, or that he certainly will fulfil his threatenings or his promises. They are not convinced of his *justice* in punishing sin, as he does. They have very wrong notions of *Christ*. They are not convinced of his *ability* to save them, or of the *sufficiency* of his sacrifice and righteousness; nor of his *willingness* to receive them.

Men are commonly subject to a great many errors about their *duty*. They are ready to bring their principles to agree with their practices, instead of bringing their practices to their principles, as they ought to do. They will put innumerable false glosses on the rules of God's word, to bend them to a compliance with their lusts; and so they "put darkness for light, and light for darkness; bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter."

They are subject to deceits and delusions about the things of *this world*. They imagine that there is happiness and satisfaction to be found in the profits, pleasures, and honors, which are to be had here. They believe all the deluding flatteries and promises of a vain world. And they will hold that deceit and grand delusion, *that these things are the highest good;* and will act accordingly;

will choose these things for their portion. And they will hold and practise upon that error, that these things are of long continuance, and are to be depended upon.

They are greatly deceived about the things of *another world*. They undervalue that heavenly glory, which is promised to the saints; and are not much terrified with what they hear of the damnation of hell; they cannot realize it, that its torments are so dreadful as they hear; and are very ready to imagine that they are not eternal, but will some time or other have an end.

They are deceived about the state of *good men*. They think they are not happy, but live a melancholy life. And they are deceived about the *wicked*. They envy the state of many of them, as accounting them well off. "They call the proud happy," Mal. iii. 15, "and bless the covetous, whom God abhors," Psal. x. 3; and they strive a great deal more after such enjoyments as these have, than after such as are the portion of the godly.

They are subject to deceits and delusions about *themselves*. They think themselves wise, when they are fools. They are deceived about their own hearts; they think them much better than they really are. They think they see many good things in themselves, when indeed there is nothing good there. They appear lovely in their own eyes, when their hearts are like the inside of a grave, full of dead men's bones and rotten flesh, crawling worms, and all uncleanness. Or rather, the inward vault of hell, that is a habitation of devils and every foul spirit. Those things in their hearts are highly esteemed by them, which are an abomination in the sight of God.

Men are very prone to be deceived about their own *state*; to think themselves something when they are nothing; and to suppose themselves "rich and increased in goods, and to have need of nothing; when they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." They are greatly deceived about the *principles* they act from. They think they are sincere in that in which there is no sincerity; and that they do those things from love to God, which they do only from love to themselves. They call mere speculative or natural knowledge, spiritual knowledge; and put conscience for grace; a servile, for a child-like fear; and common affections, that are only from natural principles, and have no abiding affect, for high discoveries, and eminent actings of grace. Yea, it is common with men to call their vicious dispositions by the name of some virtue. They call their anger and malice, zeal for a righteous cause, or zeal for the public good; and their covetousness, frugality.

They are vastly deceived about their own *righteousness*. They think their affections and performances lovely to God, which indeed are hateful to him. They think their tears, reformations, and prayers, sufficient to make atonement for their sins; when indeed if all the angels in heaven should offer themselves in sacrifice to God, it would not be sufficient to atone for one of their sins. They think their prayers and works, and religious doings, a sufficient price to purchase God's favor and eternal glory; when, as they perform them, they do nothing but merit hell.

They are greatly deceived about their *strength*. They think they are able to mend their own hearts, and work some good principles in themselves; when they can do no more towards it, than a dead corpse does towards raising itself to life. They vainly flatter themselves, they are able to come to Christ, when they are not. They are greatly deceived about the *stability* of their own hearts. They foolishly think their own intentions and resolutions of what good they will do hereafter, to be depended on; when indeed there is no dependence at all to be had on them. They are greatly deceived about their *opportunities*

They think that the long continuance of their opportunity is to be depended on and that to-morrow it is to be boasted of; when indeed there is the utmost uncertainty of it. They flatter themselves that they shall have a better opportunity to seek salvation hereafter, than they have now; when there is no probability of it, but a very great improbability.

They are greatly deceived about their own actions and *practices*. Their own faults are strangely hid from their eyes. They live in ways that are very unbecoming Christians, but yet seem not to be at all sensible of it. Those evil ways of theirs, which are very plain to others, are hid from them. Yea, those very things which they themselves count great faults in others, they will justify themselves in. Those things for which they will be very angry with others, they at the same time do themselves, and oftentimes in a much higher degree, and never once think of it. While they are zealous to pull the mote out of their brother's eye, they know not that a beam is in their own eye.

Those sins that they commit, which they are sensible are sins, they are wofully deceived about. They call great sins, little ones; and in their own imaginations find out many excuses, which make the guilt very small; while the many heinous aggravations are hid from their eyes. They are greatly deceived about themselves, when they compare themselves with others. They esteem themselves better than their neighbors, who are indeed much better than themselves. They are greatly deceived about themselves, when they compare themselves with God. They are very insensible of the difference there is between God and them, and act in many things as if they thought themselves his equals; yea, as if they thought themselves above him. Thus manifold are the deceits and delusions that men fall into.

2. The desperate blindness that is natural to men, appears in their being so ignorant and blind in things that are so clear and *plain*. Thus if we consider how great God is, and how dreadful sin against him must be, and how much sin we are guilty of, and of what importance it is that his infinite Majesty should be vindicated; how plain is it, that man's righteousness is insufficient! And yet how greatly will men confide in it! how will they ascribe more to it, than can be ascribed to the righteousness of the sinless and glorious angels of heaven! What can be more plain in itself, than that eternal things are of infinitely greater importance than temporal things? And yet how hard is it thoroughly to convince men of it! How plain is it, that eternal misery in hell is infinitely to be dreaded! And yet how few appear to be thoroughly convinced of this! How plain is it, that life is uncertain! And yet how much otherwise do most men think! How plain is it, that it is the highest prudence in matters of infinite concern to improve the first opportunity, without trusting to another! But yet how few are convinced of this! How reasonable is it, considering that God is a wise and just being, to suppose that there shall be a future state of rewards and punishments, wherein every man shall receive according to his works! And yet, how does this seem like a dream to most men!

What can be in itself more plain and manifest, and easily to be known by us, if it were not for a strange blindness, than we are to ourselves, who are always with, never absent from ourselves, always in our own view, before our own eyes; who have opportunity to look into our own hearts, and see all that passes there? And yet what is there that men are more ignorant of, than they are of themselves? There are many vicious practices, the unlawfulness of which is very plain; the sins are gross, and contrary not only to the word of God, but to the light of nature: and yet men will often plead, there is no harm in such sins; such as, many acts of gross uncleanness; and many acts of

fraud, injustice and deceitfulness; and many others that might be mentioned.

There is no one thing whatsoever more plain and manifest, and more demonstrable, than the being of a God. It is manifest in ourselves, in our own bodies and souls, and in every thing about us wherever we turn our eye, whether to heaven, or to the earth, the air, or the seas. And yet how prone is the heart of man to call this into question! So inclined is the heart of man to blindness and delusion, that it is prone to even atheism itself.

3. The great blindness of the heart of man appears, in that so *little* a thing will deceive him, and confound his judgment. A little self-interest, or only the bait of some short gratification of a sensual appetite, or a little stirring of passion, will blind men's eyes, and make them argue and judge most strangely and perversely, and draw the most absurd conclusion; such as, if they were indifferent, they would see to be most unreasonable. The devil finds easy work to deceive them a thousand ways; an argument of the great weakness and blindness of our minds. As a little child, weak in understanding, is very easily deceived.

4. The woful blindness that possesses the hearts of men naturally, appears in their being all totally ignorant of *that* in God, which they had most need to know; viz., the glory and *excellency* of his nature. Though our faculties, which we have above the beasts, were chiefly given us, that we might know this; and though without this knowledge all other will signify nothing to us; and our faculties are as capable of it, as of any other knowledge whatsoever—and which is as plainly and abundantly manifested as any thing whatsoever, innumerable ways, both in the word and works of God—yet all men naturally are totally ignorant of this; as ignorant as one born blind is of colors. Natural men of the greatest abilities and learning, are as ignorant of it, as the weakest and the most unlearned; yea, as ignorant as the very stocks and stones; for they see, and can see nothing at all of it.

5. It appears, in that they are so blind in those *same things* in religious matters, which they are sufficiently sensible of in other matters. In temporal things they are very sensible that it is a point of prudence to improve the first opportunity in things of great importance. But in matters of religion, which are of infinitely the greatest importance, they have not this discernment. In temporal matters they are sensible that it is a great folly long to delay and put off, when life is in danger, and all depends upon it. But in the concerns of their souls, they are insensible of this truth. So in the concerns of this world, they are sensible it is prudence to improve times of special advantage, and to embrace a good offer when made them. They are sensible that things of long continuance are of greater importance, than those of short duration; yet in religious concerns, none of these things are sensibly discerned. In temporal things they are sufficiently sensible, that it is a point of prudence to lay up for hereafter, in summer to lay up for winter, and to lay up for their families, after they are dead; but men do not generally discern the prudence of making a proper provision for a future state.—In matters of importance in this world, they are sensible of the wisdom of taking thorough care to be on sure grounds; but in their soul's concerns they see nothing of this. Our Saviour observed this to be the case with the Jews when he was upon earth. "Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky, and of the earth: but how is it that ye do not discern this time?" Luke xii. 56.

6. The desperate blindness that naturally possesses the hearts of men under the gospel appears in their remaining so *stupidly insensible* and deceived, under

so great means of instruction and conviction. If they were brought under heathenish darkness, it would not be so full a demonstration of it: but thus they remain, though under the clearest light, under the glorious light of the gospel, where they enjoy God's own instructions in his word, in a great fulness and plainness, and have the evidence and truth of things set before them from time to time in the plainest manner. They have the arguments of God's being and perfection; and of another world. They are told how eternal things are of greater importance than temporal; and of what importance it is to escape eternal misery. How much it is worth while to take pains for heavenly glory; and how vain their own righteousness is: but yet to what little purpose!

And they have not only great means of instruction in God's word, but also in providence. They have the evidence of the shortness and uncertainty of life. "He seeth that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others." Yet "their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling-places to all generations: they call their lands after their own names. Nevertheless man being in honor, abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish. This their way is their folly: yet their posterity approve their sayings." They find the world is vain and unsatisfactory; they find the great instability and treachery of their own hearts; and how their own good intentions and resolutions are not to be depended on. They often find by experience, that their attempts to make them better, fail; but, alas! with what small effect!

Such abundant evidence is there, both in what appears in the *open profession* of men; and also by what is *found* in their *inward experience*, and is *evident* in their *practice*, of the extreme and brutish ignorance and blindness, which naturally possess their hearts.

SECTION IV.

Practical inferences and application of the subject.

Having shown how the truth of the doctrine is evident, both by what appears in men's *open profession*, and by those things which are *found* by *inward experience*, and are *manifest* by what is visible in men's *practice*; I proceed to improve the subject.

I. By this we may see how manifest are the *ruins* of the *fall* of man. It is observable in all the kinds of God's creatures that we behold, that they have those properties and qualities, which are every way proportioned to their end; so that they need no more, they stand in need of no greater degree of perfection, in order well to answer the special use for which they seem to be designed. The brute creatures, birds, beasts, fishes, and insects, though there be innumerable kinds of them, yet all seem to have such a degree of perception and perfection given them, as best suits their place in the creation, their manner of living, and the ends for which they were made. There is no defect visible in them; they are perfect in their kind; there seems to be nothing wanting, in order to their filling up their allotted place in the world. And there can be no reasonable doubt but that it was so at first with mankind. It is not reasonable to suppose, that God would make many thousands of kinds of creatures in this lower world, and one kind the highest of them all, to be the head of the rest; and that all the rest should be complete in their kinds, every way endowed with such qualifications as are proportioned to their use and end: and only this most noble creature of all, left exceeding imperfect, notoriously destitute of what he principally stands in need of to answer the end of his being. The principal faculty by which God

has distinguished this noble creature from the rest, is his understanding: but would God so distinguish man in his creation from other creatures, and then seal up that understanding with such an extreme blindness, as to render it useless, as to the principal ends of it; and wholly to disenable him from answering the ends of an intelligent creature, and to make his understanding rather a misery than a blessing to him; and rendering him much more mischievous than useful? Therefore, if the Scripture had not told us so, yet we might safely conclude, that mankind are not now, as they were made at first; but that they are in a *fallen* state and condition.

II. From what has been said, plainly appears the *necessity* of divine *revelation*. The deists deny the Scripture to be the word of God, and hold that there is no *revealed religion;* that God has given mankind no other rule but his own reason; which is sufficient, without any word or revelation from heaven, to give man a right understanding of divine things, and of his duty. But how is it proved in fact? How much trial has there been, whether man's reason, without a revelation, would be sufficient or not! The whole world, excepting one nation, had the trial till the coming of Christ. And was not this long enough for trial, whether man's reason alone was sufficient to instruct him? Those nations, who all that time lay in such gross darkness, and in such a deplorable helpless condition, had the same natural reason that the deists have. And during this time, there was not only one man, or a succession of single persons, that had the trial, whether their own reason would be sufficient to lead them to the knowledge of the truth; but all nations, who all had the same human faculties that we have. If human reason is really sufficient, and there be no need of any thing else, why has it never proved so? Why has it never happened, that so much as one nation, or one city or town, or one assembly of men, have been brought to tolerable notions of divine things, unless it be by the revelation contained in the Scriptures? If it were only one nation that had remained in such darkness, the trial might not be thought so great; because one particular people might be under some disadvantages, which were peculiar. But thus it has been with *all nations*, except those which have been favored with the Scriptures, and in *all ages*. Where is any people, who to this day have ever delivered themselves by their own reason, or have been delivered without light fetched from the Scriptures, or by means of the gospel of Jesus Christ?

If human reason is sufficient without the Scripture, is it not strange that, in these latter ages—since navigation has been so improved, and America and many other parts of the world have been discovered, which were before unknown—no one nation has anywhere been found already enlightened, and possessed of true notions about the Divine Being and his perfections, by virtue of that human reason they have been possessed of so many thousand years? The many poor, barbarous nations here, in America, had the faculty of *reason* to do what they pleased with, *before* the Europeans came hither, and brought over the light of the gospel. If human reason alone was sufficient, it is strange, that no one people were found, in any corner of the land, who were helped by it, in the chief concern of man.

There has been a great trial, as to what men's reason can do without divine help, in those endless disputes that have been maintained. If human reason alone could help mankind, it might be expected that these disputes would have helped them, and have put an end to men's darkness. The heathen philosophers had many hundreds of years to try their skill in this way: but all without effect. That divine revelation, which the church of God has been possessed of, has been in the world "as a light shining in a dark place," 2 Peter i. 19. It

is the only remedy which God has provided for the miserable, brutish blindness of mankind, a remedy without which this fallen world would have sunk down for ever in brutal barbarism without any remedy. It is the only means that the true God has made successful in his providence, to give the nations of the world the knowledge of himself; and to bring them off from the worship of false gods.

If human reason be the *only* proper means, the means that God has designed for enlightening mankind, is it not very strange, that it has not been sufficient, nor has answered this end in any one instance? All the right *speculative* knowledge of the true God, which the deists themselves have, has been derived from divine revelation. How vain is it to dispute against fact, and the experience of so many thousand years! and to pretend that human reason is sufficient without divine revelation, when so many thousand years' experience, among so many hundreds of nations, of different tempers, circumstances, and interests, has proved the contrary! One would think all should acknowledge, that so long a time is sufficient for a trial; especially considering the miseries that the poor nations of the world have been under all this while, for want of light: the innumerable *temporal* calamities and miseries—such as sacrificing children, and many other cruelties to others, and even to themselves—besides that *eternal* perdition, which we may reasonably suppose to be the consequence of such darkness.

III. This doctrine should make us sensible how great a *mercy* it is to mankind, that God has sent his own Son into the world, to be the *light* of the world. —The subject shows what great need we stand in of some *teacher* to be sent from God. And even some of the wiser men among the *heathen* saw the *need* of this. They saw that they disputed and jangled among themselves without coming to a satisfying discovery of the truth; and hence they saw, and spoke of, the need there was of a teacher sent from *heaven*. And it is a wonderful instance of *divine mercy* that God has so beheld us in our low estate, as to provide such a glorious remedy. He has not merely sent some *created angel* to instruct us, but his *own Son*, who is in the bosom of the Father, and of the same nature and essence with him; and therefore infinitely better acquainted with him, and more sufficient to teach a blind world. He has sent him to be the light of the world, as he says of himself, "I am come a light into the world," John xii. 45. When he came, he brought glorious light. It was like the day-spring from on high, visiting a dark world, as Zacharias observes, Luke i. 77, 78, 79. After Christ came, then the glorious gospel began to spread abroad, delivering those "that had sitten in darkness, and in the region of the shadow of death."

What reason have we to rejoice, and praise God, that he has made such excellent provision for us; and has set so glorious a sun in our firmament, such a "Sun of righteousness," after we had extinguished the light which at first enlightened us; and had, as it were, brought the world into that state, in which it was when "without form, and void, and darkness was on the face of it." See Jer. iv. 22, 23.—The glory of that light which God has sent into the world, is fully answerable to the grossness of that darkness which filled it. For Christ who came to enlighten us, is truth and light itself, and the fountain of all light. "He is *the light*, and in him is no darkness at all," 1 John i. 5.

IV. Hence we may learn, what must be the thing which will bring to pass those glorious days of light, which are spoken of in God's word.—Though mankind be fallen into such darkness, and the world be mostly in the kingdom of darkness; yet the Scripture often speaks of a *glorious day*, wherein light shall

fill the earth. "For behold the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising," Isa. lx. 2, 3. "And he will destroy in this mountain, the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations," Isa. xxv. 7. "The knowledge of God shall fill the earth, as the waters cover the sea," Isa. xi. 9.

By what we have heard, we may on good grounds conclude, that whenever this is accomplished, it will not be effected by human learning, or by the skill or wisdom of great men. What has been before observed of this learned age, is a presumptive evidence of it; wherein spiritual darkness increases with the increase of learning. God will again make foolish the wisdom of this world; and will, as it were, say in his providence, "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world?"

When this shall be accomplished, it will be by *a remarkable pouring out of God's own Spirit, with the plain preaching of the gospel of his Son;* the preaching of the spiritual, mysterious doctrines of Christ crucified, which to the learned men of this world are foolishness; those doctrines, which are *the stumbling-block of this learned age.* "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." It will not be by the enticing words of man's wisdom; but by the demonstration of the Spirit, and of power. Not by the wisdom of this world, nor by the princes of this world, that come to nought: but by the gospel, that contains the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which none of the princes of this world, who have nothing to enlighten them but their own learning, know any thing of.

The Spirit of God, who searches all things, even the deep things of God, must reveal it. For let natural men be never so worldly wise and learned, they receive not the things of the Spirit: they are foolishness to them; nor can they know them, because they are spiritually discerned. This great effect, when it is accomplished, will be a glorious effect indeed: and it will be accomplished in such a manner, as most remarkably to show it to be the work of God, and his only. It will be a more glorious work of God than that which we read of in the beginning of Genesis: "And the earth was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters: and God said, Let there be light, and there was light," Gen. i. 2, 3.

V. Hence we may learn the misery of all such persons, as are under the power of that darkness which naturally possesses their hearts. There are two degrees of this misery.

1. That of which all who are in a natural condition are the subjects. The doctrine shows, that all such as are in a natural condition, are in a miserable condition: for they are in an extremely dark and blind condition. It is uncomfortable living in darkness. What a sorrowful state would we all be in, if the sun should no more rise upon us, and the moon were to withdraw her shining, and the stars to be put out, and we were to spend the rest of our time in darkness! The world would soon perish in such darkness. It was a great plague in Egypt, when they had a total darkness for three days. They who are deprived of sight, are deprived of the most noble of the senses; they have no benefit of external light, one of the most excellent and needful of all the things which God has made in the visible creation. But they who are without spiritual sight and light, are destitute of that which is far more excellent and necessary.

That natural men are not *sensible* of their blindness, and the misery they are under by reason of it, is no argument that they are not miserable. For it is very much the nature of this calamity to be hid from itself, or from those who are under it. Fools are not sensible of their folly. Solomon says, "The fool is wiser in his own conceit, than seven men that can render a reason," Prov. xxvi. 16. The most barbarous and brutish heathens are not sensible of their own darkness; are not sensible but that they enjoy as great light, and have as good understanding of things, as the most enlightened nations in the world.

2. Another degree of this misery, is of those who are judicially given up of God, to the blindness of their own minds. The Scripture teaches us that there are some such. "What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for, but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded," Rom. xi. 7. "But their minds were blinded; for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away," 2 Cor. iii. 14. "And he said, Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, and understand not; and see ye indeed, and perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and convert and be healed," Isa. vi. 6, 10. This judgment, when inflicted, is commonly for the contempt and abuse of light which has been offered, for the commission of presumptuous sins, and for being obstinate in sin, and resisting the Holy Ghost, and many gracious calls and counsels, warnings and reproofs.

Who the particular persons are, that are thus judicially given up of God to the blindness of their minds, is not known to men. But we have no reason to suppose that there are not multitudes of them; and most in places of the greatest light. There is no manner of reason to suppose, that this judgment, which is spoken of in Scripture, is in a great measure *peculiar* to those old times. As there were many who fell under it in the times of the prophets of old, and of Christ and his apostles; so doubtless there are now also. And though the persons are not known, yet doubtless there may be more reason to fear it concerning some than others. All who are under the power of the blindness of their own minds, are miserable; but such as are given up to this blindness, are especially miserable; for they are reserved, and sealed over to the blackness of darkness for ever.

SECTION V.

Address to Sinners.

The consideration of what has been said of the desperate blindness which possesses the hearts of us all naturally, may well be terrifying to such as are yet in a Christless condition, in this place of light; where the gospel has been so long enjoyed, and where God has in times past so wonderfully poured out his Spirit.

And let such persons, for their awakening, consider the following things:

1. That they are blinded by the god of this world. Their blindness is from hell. This darkness which natural men are under, is from the prince of darkness. This the apostle says expressly of those who remain in unbelief and blindness under the gospel: "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid from them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not," 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. They belong to the kingdom of darkness. In that darkness which reigns in their souls, the devil reigns; and he holds his dominion there.

2. Consider how God in his word manifests his abhorrence and wrath towards those who remain so sottishly blind and ignorant, in the midst of light. How

does God speak of them! "Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge?" Psal. xiv. 4. "Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways, unto whom I sware in my wrath, that they should not enter into my rest:" Psal. xcv. 10, 11 "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah, sinful nation—they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger," Isa. i. 3, 4. "It is a people of no understanding; therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will show them no favor," Isa. xxvii. 10. "My people is foolish, they have not known me, they are sottish children, and they have no understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge," Jer. iv. 22. "Declare this in the house of Jacob, and publish it in the house of Judah, saying, Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding, which have eyes and see not, which have ears and hear not. Fear ye not ME? saith the Lord; will ye not tremble at MY presence?" Jer. v. 20, 21, 22.

3. Consider how much *wilfulness* there is in your ignorance. Sinners are ready wholly to excuse themselves in their blindness; whereas, as observed already, the blindness that naturally possesses the hearts of men, is not a merely negative thing; but they are blinded by "the deceitfulness of sin," Heb. iii. 13. There is a perverseness in their blindness. There is not a mere absence of light, but a malignant opposition to the light; as God says, "they know not, neither will they understand, they walk on in darkness," Psal. lxxii. 5. Christ observes, "that every one that doeth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light." And that "this is their condemnation, that light is come into the world, yet men loved darkness rather than light," John iii. 19, 20. And I may appeal to your own consciences, whether you have not wilfully rejected the many instructions you have had; and refused to hearken? Whether you have not neglected to seek after the light, and neglected your Bible? Whether you have not been a very negligent hearer of the word preached, and neglected other proper means of knowledge? Whether you have not neglected to cry to God for that wisdom which you need? Yea, have you not resisted the means of knowledge? Have you not resisted and quenched the motions of the Spirit, which at times you have had? And taken a course to make yourself more and more stupid, by stifling the convictions of your own conscience, and doing contrary to the light thereof; whereby you have done those things that have tended to sear your conscience, and make yourself more and more senseless and sottish.

4. Consider what is the course that God will take to teach those who will not be taught by the instructions of his word. He will teach them by briers and thorns, and by the flames of hell. Though natural men will remain to all eternity ignorant of the excellency and loveliness of God's nature, and so will have no spiritual knowledge; yet God in another world will make them thoroughly to understand many things, which senseless unawakened sinners are sottishly ignorant of in this world. Their eyes in many respects shall be thoroughly opened in hell. Their judgments will be rectified. They shall be of the same judgment with the godly. They will be convinced of the *reality* of those things which they would not be convinced of here; as the being of God; his power, holiness, and justice: that the Scriptures are the word of God; that Christ is the Son of God; and that time is short and uncertain. They will be convinced of the vanity of the world; of the blessed opportunity they had in the world; and how much it is men's wisdom to improve their time. We read of the rich man who was so sottishly blind in this world, that "in hell he lift

up his eyes, and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom," Luke xvi. 23. With many men, alas! the first time they open their eyes is in hell.

God will make all men to know the truth of those great things which he speaks of in his word, one way or another; for he will vindicate his own truth. He has undertaken to convince all men. They who will not be convinced in this world, by the gentle and gracious methods which God uses with them now, shall be convinced hereafter by severe means. If they will not be convinced for salvation, they shall be convinced by damnation. God will make them know that he is the Lord. And he will make them know that he bears rule. "Consume them in wrath, that they may not be; and let them know that God ruleth in Jacob, unto the ends of the earth," Psal. lix. 13. "Let them be confounded and troubled for ever: yea, let them be put to shame, and perish. That men may know that thou, whose name is Jehovah, art the Most High over all the earth," Psal. lxxxiii. 17, 18.

What great care we had need all have, that we be not deceived in matters of religion. If our hearts are all naturally possessed with such an extreme brutish ignorance and blindness in things of religion, and we are exceedingly prone to delusion; then surely great care ought to be taken to avoid it. For that we are naturally prone to delusion, shows our danger: but the greater our danger of any calamity is, the greater had our watchfulness need to be.—Let us therefore be hence warned to take heed that we be not deceived about our duty; about our own hearts; about our ways; about our state; and about our opportunities. Thousands are deceived in these things, and thousands perish by that means. Multitudes fall on our right hand and on our left, and are ruined eternally by their delusion in these things.

How foolish a thing it is for men to lean to their own understanding, and trust their own hearts. If we are so blind, then our own wisdom is not to be depended on; and that advice of the wise man is most reasonable: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding," Prov. iii. 5, and "He that trusteth in his own heart, is a fool," Prov. xxviii. 26.—They therefore are fools, who trust to their own wisdom, and will question the mysterious doctrines of religion; because they cannot see through them, and will not trust to the infinite wisdom of God.

Let us therefore become fools; be sensible of our own natural blindness and folly. There is a treasure of wisdom contained in that one sentence: "If any among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise," 1 Cor. iii. 18. Seeing our own ignorance, and blindness, is the first step towards having true knowledge. "If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know," 1 Cor. viii. 2.

Let us ask wisdom of God. If we are so blind in ourselves, then knowledge is not to be sought for out of our own stock, but must be sought from some other source. And we have nowhere else to go for it, but to the fountain of light and wisdom. True wisdom is a precious jewel; and none of our fellow-creatures can give it us, nor can we buy it with any price we have to give. It is the sovereign gift of God. The way to obtain it, is to go to him, sensible of our weakness, and blindness, and misery on that account. "If any lack wisdom let him ask of God," James i. 5.

SERMON III.

MEN NATURALLY GOD'S ENEMIES.

ROMANS v. 10.—For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son

THE apostle, from the beginning of the epistle to the beginning of this chapter, hath insisted on the doctrine of justification by faith alone. And having particularly spoken to that, in this chapter he goes on to consider the benefits that are consequent on justification. And there are three that flow from justification, which are here spoken of, viz., peace with God, present happiness, and hope of glory. Peace with God is mentioned in the first verse. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." In the following verses he speaks of present blessedness, and hope of glory, as benefits accompanying justification. "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace, wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

And concerning this benefit of the hope of glory, the apostle does particularly take notice of two things, viz., the blessed nature of this hope, and the sure ground of it.

1. He insists on the blessed nature of this hope, in that it enables us to glory in tribulations. This excellent nature of true Christian hope is described in the following words: "And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us," verses 3—5, q. d. Through hope of a blessed reward, that will abundantly more than make up for all tribulation, we are enabled to bear tribulation with patience; patiently bearing, and patiently waiting for the reward. And patience works experience; for when we thus bear tribulation with patient waiting for the reward, this brings experience of the earnest of the reward, viz., the earnest of the Spirit, in our feeling the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. So that our hope does not make us ashamed; though we do bear tribulation, our hope is not disappointed; for in the midst of our tribulation, we experience those blessed incomes of the Spirit in our souls, that make even a time of tribulation sweet to us; and is such an earnest as abundantly confirms our hope; and so experience works hope.

2. The apostle takes notice of the sure and abundant ground there is for this hope; or the abundant evidence we have, that we shall obtain the glory hoped for, in that peace we have with God, in our justification through Christ's blood; because that while we were without strength, in due time Christ died for us: while we were ungodly and sinners, enemies to God and Christ, verses 6—10 The apostle's argument is exceeding clear and strong: that if God has done already so great a thing for us, as to give us Christ, to die and shed his precious blood for us, which was vastly the greatest thing, we need not doubt but that he will bestow life upon us, after all this is already done. It is but a small thing for God actually to bestow eternal life, after it is purchased, to what it is for him to give his own Son to die, to purchase it. The giving Christ to purchase it, was virtually all; it included the whole grace of God in salvation. When Christ had purchased salvation at such a dear rate, all the difficulty was got through, all was virtually over and done. It is a small thing, in comparison,

for God to bestow salvation, after it has been thus purchased at a full price. Sinners that are justified by the death of Christ, are already virtually saved: the thing is, as it were, done; what remains is no more than the necessary consequence of what is done. Christ when he died made an end of sin; and when he rose from the dead, he did virtually rise with the elect; he brought them up from death with him, and ascended into heaven with them. And therefore, when this is already done, and we are thus reconciled to God through the death of his Son, we need not fear but that we shall be saved by his life. The love of God appears much more in his giving his Son to die for sinners, than in giving eternal life after Christ's death.

The giving of Christ to die for us is here spoken of as a much greater thing, than the actual bestowment of life, on two accounts.

1. That this is all that has any difficulty in it.

2. When God did this for us, he did it for us as sinners and enemies. But in actually bestowing salvation on us after we are justified, we are not looked upon as sinners. After we are justified, God does not look on us any longer as sinners, but as perfectly righteous persons; he beholds no iniquity in us. We are no more enemies, for then we are reconciled. When God gave Christ to die for the elect, he looked on them as they are in themselves; but in actually bestowing eternal life, he does not look on them as they are in themselves, but as they are in Christ.

There are three epithets used in the text and context, as appertaining to sinners as they are in themselves.

1. They are *without strength*, they cannot help themselves, verses 6—8.
2. They are *ungodly*, or sinners.
3. They are *enemies*, as in the text.

DOCTRINE:

NATURAL MEN ARE GOD'S ENEMIES.

God, though the Creator of all things, yet has some enemies in the world.

Men in general will own, that they are, or have been sinners. There are few, if any at all, whose consciences are so blinded as not to be sensible they have been guilty of sin. And most sinners will own that they have bad hearts. They will own that they do not love God so much as they should do; and that they are not so thankful as they ought to be for mercies; and that in many things they fail. And yet few of them are sensible that they are God's enemies. They do not see how they can be truly so called; they are not sensible that they wish God any hurt, or endeavor to do him any.

But we see that the Scripture speaks of them as enemies to God. So in our text, and elsewhere, "And you that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your minds by wicked works," Col. i. 21. "The carnal mind is enmity against God, "Rom. vii. 7.

And that all natural, or unregenerate men are indeed so, is what I shall endeavor now particularly to show. Which I propose to do in the following method:

1. I shall show, in what respects they are enemies to God.
2. To how great a degree they are enemies.
3. Why they are enemies.
4. I shall answer some objections.

I. I am to show, in what respects they are enemies to God.

1. Their enmity appears in their judgments; in the judgment and esteem

they have of God. They have a very mean esteem of God. Men are ready to entertain a good esteem of those with whom they are friends: they are apt to think highly of their qualities, to give them their due praises; and if there be defects, to cover them. But those to whom they are enemies, they are disposed to have mean thoughts of; they are apt to entertain a dishonorable opinion of them; they will be ready to look contemptibly upon any thing that is praiseworthy in them.

So it is with natural men towards God. They entertain very low and contemptible thoughts of God. Whatever honor and respect they may pretend and make a show of towards God, if their practice be examined, it will show, that they do certainly look upon him to be a Being, that is but little to be regarded They think him one that is worthy of very little honor and respect, not worthy to be much taken notice of. The language of their hearts is, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" Exod. v. 2. "What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have if we pray unto him?" Job xxi. 15. They count him worthy neither to be loved nor feared They dare not behave with that slight and disregard towards one of their fellow creatures, when a little raised above them in power and authority, as they dare and do towards God. They value one of their equals much more than God, and are ten times more afraid of offending such a one, than of displeasing the God that made them. They cast such exceeding contempt on God, as to prefer every vile lust before him. And every worldly enjoyment is set higher in their esteem than God. A morsel of meat, or a few pence of worldly gain, is preferred before him. God is set last and lowest in the esteem of natural men.

2. They are enemies in the natural relish of their souls. They have an inbred distaste and disrelish of God's perfections. God is not such a sort of being as they would have. Though they are ignorant of God, yet from what they hear of him, and from what is manifest by the light of nature of God, they do not like him. By his being endowed with such attributes as he is, they have an aversion to him. They hear God is an infinitely holy, pure, and righteous Being, and they do not like him upon this account; they have no relish of such kind of qualifications; they take no delight in contemplating them. It would be a mere task, a bondage to a natural man, to be obliged to set himself to contemplate these attributes of God. They see no manner of beauty or loveliness, nor taste any sweetness in them. And upon the account of their distaste of these perfections, they dislike all the other of his attributes. They have greater aversion to him because he is omniscient and knows all things; because his omniscience is a holy omniscience. They are not pleased that he is omnipotent, and can do whatever he pleases; because it is a holy omnipotence. They are enemies even to his mercy, because it is a holy mercy. They do not like his immutability, because by this he never will be otherwise than he is, an infinitely holy God.

It is from this disrelish that natural men have of the attributes of God, that they do not love to have much to do with God. The natural tendency of the heart of man is to fly from God, and keep at a distance from him; and get as far off as possible from God. A natural man is averse to communion with God, and is naturally disinclined to those exercises of religion wherein he has immediately to do with God. It is said of wicked man, "God is not in all his thoughts," Psal. x. 4. It is evident that the mind of man is naturally averse to thinking about God; and hence, if any thoughts of God be suggested to the mind, they soon go away: such thoughts are not apt to rest in the minds of

natural men. If any thing is said to them of God, they are apt to forget it: it is like seed that falls upon the hard path, it does not at all enter in, and the fowls of the air soon catch it away; or like seed that falls upon a rock. Other things will stick; but divine things do, as it were, rebound; and if they are cast into the mind, they meet with that there which soon thrusts them out again; they meet with no suitable entertainment, but are soon chased away.

Hence, also it is that natural men are so difficultly persuaded to be constant in the duty of secret prayer. They would not be so averse to spending a quarter of an hour, night and morning, in some bodily labor, but it is because they are averse to a work wherein they have so immediately to do with God, and they naturally love to keep at a distance from God.

3. Their wills are contrary to his will. God's will and theirs are exceeding cross the one to the other. God wills those things that they hate, and are most averse to; and they will those things that God hates. Hence they oppose God in their wills: they set up their wills against the will of God. There is a dreadful, violent, and obstinate opposition of the will of natural men to the will of God.

They are very opposite to the commands of God. It is from the enmity of the will, that "the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be," Rom. vii. 7. Hence natural men are enemies to God's government. They are not loyal subjects, but enemies to God, considered as Lord of the world. They are entire enemies to God's authority.

4. They are enemies to God in their affections. There is in every natural man a seed of malice against God: yea, there is such a seed of this rooted in the heart of man naturally. And it does often dreadfully break forth and appear. Though it may in a great measure lie hid in secure times, when God lets men alone, and they meet with no great disturbance of body or mind; yet if God does but touch men a little in their consciences, by manifesting to them a little of his wrath for their sins, this oftentimes brings out the principle of malice against God, which is exercised in dreadful heart-risings, inward wranglings and quarrelings, and blasphemous thoughts; wherein the heart is like a viper, hissing, and spitting poison at God. There is abundance of such a principle in the heart. And however free from it the heart may seem to be when let alone and secure, yet a very little thing will set it in a rage. Temptation will show what is in the heart. The alteration of a man's circumstances will often discover the heart: a change of circumstance will bring that out which was hid before. Pharaoh had no more natural enmity against God than other men; and if other natural men had been in Pharaoh's circumstances, the same corruptions would have put forth themselves in as dreadful a manner. The Scribes and Pharisees had naturally no more of a principle of malice in their hearts against Christ than other men; and other natural men would, in their case, and having as little restraint, exercise as much malice against Christ as they did. When wicked men come to be cast into hell, then their malice against God will appear. Then it will appear what dreadful malice they have in their hearts. Then their hearts will appear as full of malice as hell is full of fire. But when wicked men come to be in hell, there will be no new corruptions put into their hearts; but only old ones will then break forth without restraint. That is all the difference between a wicked man on earth and a wicked man in hell, that in hell there will be more to stir up the exercise of corruption, and less to restrain it than on earth; but there will be no new corruption put in. A wicked man will have no principle of corruption in hell, but what he carried to hell with him. There are now the seeds of all the malice

that will be exercised then. The malice of damned spirits is but a branch of the root, that is in the hearts of natural men now. A natural man has a heart like the heart of a devil; but only as corruption is more under restraint in man than in devils.

5. They are enemies in their practice. "They walk contrary to him," Lev xxvi. 21. Their enmity against God does not lie still, but they are exceeding active in it. They are engaged in a war against God. Indeed they cannot hurt God, he is so much above them; but yet they do what they can. They oppose themselves to his honor and glory: they oppose themselves to the interest of his kingdom in the world: they oppose themselves to the will and command of God; and oppose him in his government. They oppose God in his works, and in his declared designs; while God is doing one work, they are doing the contrary, and as much as in them lies, counter-working; God seeks one thing, and they seek directly the contrary. They list under Satan's banner, and are his willing soldiers in his opposing the kingdom of God.

I proceed now,

II. To say something with respect to the degree of this enmity; tending in some measure to show, how great enemies natural men are to God.

1. They have no love to God; their enmity is mere enmity, without any mixture of love. A natural man is wholly destitute of any principle of love to God, and never had the least exercise of this love. Some natural men have had better natural tempers than others; and some are better educated than others; and some live a great deal more soberly than others; but one has no more love to God than another; for none have the least spark of that. The heart of a natural man is as destitute of love to God, as a dead, stiff, cold corpse is of vital heat. "I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you," John v. 43.

2. Every faculty and principle of action is wholly under the dominion of enmity against God. The nature of man is wholly infected with this enmity against God. He is tainted with it throughout, in all his faculties and principles. And not only so, but every faculty is entirely and perfectly subdued under it, and enslaved to it. This enmity against God has the absolute possession of the man. The Apostle Paul, speaking of what he was naturally, says, "I am carnal, sold under sin," Rom. vii. 14.

The understanding is under the reigning power of this enmity against God, so that it is entirely darkened and blinded with regard to the glory and excellency of God. The will is wholly under the reigning power of it. All the affections are governed by enmity against God; there is not one affection, nor one desire, that a natural man has, or that he is ever stirred up to act from, but what contains in it enmity against God. A natural man is as full of enmity against God, as any viper, or any venomous beast is full of poison.

3. The power of the enmity of natural men against God, is so great, that it is insuperable by any finite power. It has too great and strong a possession of the heart, to be overcome by any created power. Natural men cannot overcome their own enmity, let them strive never so much with their own hearts. Indeed a natural man never sincerely strives to root out his enmity against God; his endeavors are hypocritical: he delights in his enmity, and chooses it. Neither can others do it, though they sincerely, and to their utmost, endeavor to overcome this enmity. If godly friends and neighbors labor to persuade them to cast away their enmity, and become friends to God, they cannot persuade him to it. Though ministers use never so many arguments and entreaties, and set forth the loveliness of God, and tell them of the goodness of God to them, and hold forth to them God's own gracious invitations, and entreat them never so

earnestly to cast off their opposition and enmity, and to be reconciled, and become friends, yet they cannot overcome it: still they will be as bad enemies to God as ever they were. The tongue of men or of angels cannot persuade them to relinquish their opposition to God. Miracles will not do it. How many miracles did the children of Israel see in the wilderness! Yet their enmity against God remained, as appeared by their often murmuring. And how often did Christ use miracles to this end without effect! But the Jews yet obstinately stood out. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Matt. xxiii. 37. And how great did the enmity of these people appear to be after all; how spiteful and venomous were their hearts towards Christ, as appears by their cruel treatment of him in his last sufferings!

They are mortal enemies to God, i. e., they have that enmity in their hearts, that strikes at the life of God. A man may be no friend to another, and may have an ill spirit towards him, and yet not be his mortal enemy: his enmity will be satisfied and glutted with something short of the death of the person. But it is not so with natural men with respect to God, they are mortal enemies. Indeed natural men cannot kill God. They have no hope of it, and so make no attempts. It has ever been looked upon so much above their power, that, it may be, it is not thought of. But this is no argument that this is not the tendency of the principle

Natural men are enemies to the dominion of God; and their nature shows their good will to pull him down out of heaven, and dethrone him if they could! Yea, they are enemies to the being of God, and would be glad if there was no God, and therefore it necessarily follows, that they would kill him, and cause that there should be none, if they could.

"The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God," Psal. xiv. 1. This saying in his heart, there is no God, implies in it, not only an aptness to question the being of God, but it implies that he inclines it should be so. His heart says, i. e., his inclination says. The words in the original are thus: "The fool hath said in his heart, no God." The words, *there is*, are not in the original, but were put in by the translators. Now, if we read the words so, "The fool hath said in his heart, no God," they will perhaps show the Psalmist's meaning more fully than as they are now translated. "The fool hath said in his heart, no God." That is, I would have none, I do not desire any, I wish there was none, that would suit my inclination best. That is the language of the inclinations of a natural man; no God. Let there be no God for me, let me have no God; let the world be emptied of a God, he stands in my way. And hence he is an Atheist in his heart, he is ready to think there is none; and that also is ready to be the language of his heart, "There is no God."

The viper's poison is deadly poison; and when he bites, he seeks the precious life. And men are in this respect a generation of vipers. Their poison, which is enmity against God, seeks the life of God. "O generation of vipers," Matt. iii. 7. "The wicked are estranged from the womb.—Their poison is like the poison of a serpent," Psal. lviii. 3, 4. "For their vine is the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah; their grapes are the grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter. Their wine is the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps," Deut. xxxii. 32, 33.

The divine nature being immortal, and infinitely out of our reach, there is no other trial possible, whether the enmity that is naturally in the heart against

God, be mortal or no, but only for God to take on him the human nature and become man, so as to come within man's reach, that they should be capable of killing him. There can be no other experiment but this. And this trial there has been. And what has been the event? Why, when once God became man, and came down to dwell here among such vipers as fallen men, they hated him and persecuted him; and never left him till they had imbrued their hands in his blood. There was a multitude of them that appeared combined in this design. Nothing would do, but he must be put to death. All cry out, "Crucify him, crucify him. Away with him." They had rather Barabbas, who greatly deserved death, should live, than he should not die. Nothing would restrain them from it; even all his preaching, and all his miracles; but they would kill him. And it was not the ordinary kind of execution that would satisfy them; but it must be the most cruel, and most ignominious they possibly could invent. And they, in the time of it, added to it, and aggravated it as much as ever they could, by mocking him, and spitting on him, and scourging him. This shows what the nature and tendency of man's enmity against God is; here it appears in its true colors.

5. Natural men are greater enemies to God than they are to any other being whatsoever. Natural men may be very great enemies to their fellow creatures, but not so great as they are to God. There is no other being that so much stands in sinners' way, in those things that they chiefly set their hearts upon, as God. Men are wont to hate their enemies in proportion to two things, viz., their opposition to what they look upon to be their interest, and their power and ability. One that is looked upon a great and powerful enemy, will be more hated than one that is weak and impotent. But none of their enemies are so powerful as God.

Man's enmity to other enemies may be got over: time may wear it out, and they may be reconciled and be friends. But natural men, without a mighty work of God to change their hearts, will never get over their enmity against God. They are greater enemies to God than they are to the devil. Yea, they treat the devil as their friend and master, and join in with him against God. "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do: he was a murderer from the beginning," John viii. 44.

I now proceed,

III. To show why, or on what account they are enemies to God.

The general reason is, that God is opposite to them in the worship of their idols.

The apostasy of man does summarily consist in departing from the true God to idols; forsaking his Creator, and setting up other things in his room.

When God at first created man, he was united to his Creator; the God that made him was his God. The true God was the object of his highest respect, and had the possession of his heart. Love to God was the principle in his heart, that ruled over all other principles; and every thing in the soul was wholly in subjection to it. But when man fell, he departed from the true God, and the union that was between his heart and his Creator was broken: he wholly lost the principle of love he had to God. And henceforward man clave to other gods. He gave that respect to the creature which is due to the Creator. When God ceased to be the object of his supreme love and respect, other things of course became the objects of it.

Man will necessarily have something that he respects as God. If man does not give his highest respect to the God that made him, there will be something else that has the possession of it. Men will either worship the true God, or

some idol: it is impossible it should be otherwise; something will have the heart of man. And that which a man gives his heart to, may be called his god; and therefore, when man by the fall extinguished all love to the true God, he set up the creature in his room.

And so man came to be at enmity against the true God. For having lost his esteem and love of the true God, and set up other gods in his room, and in opposition to him; and God still demanding their worship, and opposing them in their worship of those false gods; and man continuing still to worship idols, enmity necessarily follows.

That which a man chooses for his god he sets his heart mainly upon. And nothing will so soon excite enmity as opposition in that which is dearest. A man will be the greatest enemy to him who opposes him in what he chooses for his god: he will look on none as standing so much in his way as he that would deprive him of his god: "Ye have taken away my gods; and what have I more?" Judg. xviii. 24. A man in this respect cannot serve two masters that stand in competition for his service. And not only if he serves one, he cannot serve the other, but if he cleaves to one he will necessarily hate the other. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon," Matt. vi. 24. And this is the very reason that men hate God. In this case it is as when two kings set up in one kingdom in opposition one to the other; and they both challenge the same throne, and are competitors for the same crown; they that are loyal, hearty subjects to one, will necessarily be enemies to the other. It alway happens so, nor indeed can it be otherwise.

As that which is a man's god, is the object of his highest love; so that God, who chiefly opposes him in it, must be the object of his greatest hatred.

The gods which a natural man worships, instead of the God that made him, are himself and the world. He has withdrawn his esteem and honor from God, and proudly exalts himself as Satan did: he was not willing to be in such subjection; and therefore rebelled, and set up himself for God. So a natural man in the proud and high thoughts he has of himself, sets up himself upon God's throne. And he gives his heart to the world, worldly riches, and worldly pleasures, and worldly honors; they have the possession of that regard which is due to God. The apostle sums up all the idolatry of wicked men in their love of the world. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world," 1 John ii. 15, 16. And the Apostle James observes, that a man must necessarily be the enemy of the true God, if he be a friend of the world. "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God," James iv. 4.

All the sin that men commit, is what they do in the service of their idols: there is no one act of sin, but what is an act of service to some false god. And therefore wherein soever God opposes sin in them, he is opposite to their worship of their idols; on which account they are enemies to God.

God opposes them in their service of their idols in the following respects.

1. He manifests his utter abhorrence of their worship of their idols. Their idols are what they love above all things; they would by no means part with them. This wickedness is sweet unto them, Job xx. 12. If you take them away what have they more? If they lose their idols, they lose their all. To rend away their idols from them would be more grievous to them, than to rend

body and soul asunder; it is like rending their heart in twain. They love their idolatry; but God does not approve of it, but exceedingly hates it; he hates it implacably, and will by no means be reconciled to it; and therefore they hate him. God declares an infinite hatred of every act of sin which they do; or every act that they do in the service of their false gods. He approves of it in no part, but hates it all. He declares himself to be a holy God, and a jealous God; a God that is very jealous of his own honor; and that greatly abhors the giving that honor to another.

2. He utterly forbids their cleaving to those idols, and all the service that they do to them. He not only shows that he dislikes it, but he utterly forbids it; and demands that they should worship him, and serve him only, and give their hearts wholly to him, without tolerating any competitor. He allows them to serve their idols in no degree; but requires them to cast them away utterly, and pay no more worship to them at any time. He requires a final parting with their idols. Not only that they should refrain from them for a while, but cast them away forever, and never gratify their idolatrous respect to them any more This is so exceeding contrary to them, and what they are so averse to, and so obstinate in their refusal of, that they are enemies to God for it. They cannot endure God's commands, because they forbid all that which their hearts are so engaged in. And as they hate God's commands, so they hate him whose commands they are.

3. He threatens them with everlasting damnation for their service of their idols. He threatens them for their past idolatry. He threatens them with his eternal wrath, for their having departed from him, and their having chosen to themselves other gods. He threatens them for that disposition they have in their hearts to cleave to other gods: he threatens the least degrees of that respect which they have in their hearts to their idols. He manifests that he will not tolerate any regard to them, but has fixed eternal death, as the wages of every degree of it. And he will not release them from their guilt; he holds them to their obligations; he will not acquit them at all; and he will accept of no atonement that they can make. He will not forgive them, whatever they do in religion; whatever pains they take; whatever tears they shed. He will accept of no money or price that they have to offer.

And he threatens every future act of their idolatry. He not only forbids them ever to be guilty of the least act, but forbids them on pain of eternal damnation. So strictly does God prohibit them from the service of their idols, that are so dear to them, that are their all, and which they would on no account part with. He threatens them with everlasting wrath for all exercises of inordinate love of worldly profit; for all manifestations of inordinate regard to worldly pleasures, or worldly honors. He threatens them with everlasting torments for their self-exaltation. He requires them to deny themselves, and renounce themselves, and to abase themselves at his feet, on pain of bearing his wrath to all eternity.

The strictness of God's law is a principal cause of man's enmity against God. If God were a God that did not so much hate sin; if he were one who would allow them in the gratification of their lusts, in some degree: and his threatenings were not so awful against all indulgence of their lust; if his threatenings were not so absolute; if his displeasure could be appeased by a few tears, and a little reformation, or the like; they would not be so great enemies, nor hate him so much as they do now. But God shows himself to be an implacable enemy to their idols, to every degree of their service of them; and has threatened everlasting wrath, infinite calamity for all that they do in the

service of their lusts; and holds them bound under his wrath therefor. And this makes them irreconcilable enemies to him.

For this reason the Scribes and Pharisees were such bitter enemies to Christ, because he showed himself to be such an enemy to their pride, and conceit of their own wisdom, and their self-righteousness, and inordinate affection of their own honor, which was their god. Natural men are enemies to God, because he is so opposite to them in that in which they place their all. If you go to take away that which is very dear to a man, nothing will provoke him more. God is infinitely opposite to that in which natural men place all their delight, and all their happiness, viz., their gods. He is an enemy to that which natural men value as their greatest honor and highest dignity; and which they trust wholly to, that which is all their dependence, viz., their own righteousness.

Hence natural men are greater enemies to God than they are to any other being. Some of their fellow creatures may stand very much in their way with regard to some things they set their hearts upon; but God opposes them with respect to all their idols, and those gods which are their all. And then God's opposition to their idols, which are above all things dear to them, is infinitely great. None of our fellow creatures ever oppose us in any of our interests so much as God opposes wicked men in their idolatry; for God has an infinite opposition against it. His infinite opposition is manifested by his threatening an infinite punishment, viz., his dreadful wrath to all eternity, misery without end. Hence we need not wonder that natural men are enemies to God.

Having thus shown, in some measure, why natural men are God's enemies, I proceed to the last thing proposed:

IV. To consider and make answer to some objections, that some may be ready to make against this.

Natural men do not generally conceive themselves to be so bad: they have not this notion of themselves, that they are enemies to God. And therefore when they hear such doctrine as this taught them, they stand ready to make objections.

Object. 1. Some natural men may be ready to say, I do not know that I feel any such enmity in my heart against God as is spoken of. I am not sensible that I am such a dreadful enemy, so as to hate God, and to have a mortal enmity against him; and to have a disposition, if I could, to kill him. I feel no such thing in myself, and why should I think that I have such a thing in me? If I have such enmity, why do not I feel it? If I am a mortal enemy, why should I not know it better than any body else? How can others see what is in my heart better than I myself? If I hate one of my fellow creatures, and have a spirit against him, I can feel it inwardly working. To such an objection I would,

Ans. 1. If you do but observe yourself, and search your own heart, unless you are strangely blinded, you may be sensible of those things wherein enmity does fundamentally consist. As particularly, you may be sensible that you have at least had a low and contemptible esteem of God; and that you in your esteem set the trifles and vanities of this world far above him; so as to esteem the enjoyment of these things far before the enjoyment of God, and to value these things better than his love. And you may be sensible that you despise the authority of God, and value his commands and his honor but very little. Or if by some means you have blinded yourself now, so as to think you do regard them now, doubtless you can look back and see that you have not regarded them. You may be sensible that you have had a disrelish and aversion towards God; an opposition to thinking of God, or to have any thing to do

with him; so that it would have been a very uncomfortable task to have been confined to it for any time; and that when the vanities of the world, at the same time, have been very pleasing to you; and you have been all swallowed up in them, while you have been averse to the things of religion.

If you look into your heart, it is there plain to be seen, that there is an enmity in your will, that your will is contrary to God's will; for you have been opposing the will of God all your life long. These things are plain in natural men; it is nothing but some great delusion that can hide them from you. And these things are the foundation of all enmity; if these things be in you, all the rest that we have spoken of will follow of course.

2. One reason why you have not more sensibly felt the exercises of malice against God is, that your enmity is now exercised partly in your unbelief of God's being; and this prevents it appearing in other ways, that otherwise it would. Man has naturally a principle of atheism in him; an indisposition to realize God's being, and a disposition to doubt of it. The being of God does not ordinarily seem real to natural men. All the discoveries that there are of God's being, in his works, will not overcome the principle of atheism that is in the heart. And though they seem in some measure to be rationally convinced, yet it does not appear real; the conviction is faint, there is no strong conviction impressed on the mind, that there is a God: and oftentimes they are ready to think that there is none. Now this will prevent the exercise of this enmity that otherwise would be felt; particularly, it may be an occasion of there not being those sensible exercises of hatred, that otherwise there would be.

It may in some measure be illustrated by this: if you had a rooted malice against another man, a principle that had been long established there; if you should hear that he was dead, and so should conceive that he had no being, the sensible workings of your malice would not be felt, as when you realized it that he was alive, or that there was such a person; and that although there be the same thing in the foundation, which would appear, if you should afterwards hear the news contradicted, and perceive that your enemy was still alive; you would feel the same workings of hatred that you did before. And when you thought he was dead, you might feel the exercise of your enmity, in being glad of it. And thus your not realizing it, that God has a being, may prevent those sensible workings of hatred, that otherwise you would have. If wicked men in this world were sensible of the reality of God's being, as the wicked are in another, they would feel more of that hatred, that men in another world do. The exercise of corruption in one way, may, and often does prevent it working in other ways. As covetousness may prevent the exercise of pride, so atheism may prevent malice; and yet it may be no argument of there being any the less of a principle of enmity in the heart; for it is the same enmity working in another way. The same enmity that in this world works by atheism, will in another world, where there will be no room for atheism, work by malice and blasphemy. The same mortal enmity that, if you saw there was a God, might make you to wish him dead, and to desire, if it were possible, to kill him, may now dispose and incline to think there is none. Men are very often apt to think things are so as they would have them to be. The same principle disposes you to think God has no life, which, if you knew he had, would dispose you, if it were possible, to take it away.

3. If you think that there is a God, yet you do not realize it, that he is such a God as he is. You do not realize it, that he is so holy a God as he is: you do not realize it, that he has such a hatred of sin as indeed he has. You do not realize it, that he is so just a God as he is, that will by no means clear the

guilty. But that in the Psalms is applicable to you: "These things hast thou done, and I kept silence: thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself," Psal. l. 21. So that if you think there is a God, you do not think there is such a God as there is. And your atheism appears in this, as well as in thinking there is no God. For that God that you think there is, is not that God that indeed is, but another, one of your own feigning, the fruit of your own vain, deluded imagination. So that your objection arises from this, that you do not find such a sensible hatred against that god which you have formed, to suit yourself; a god that you like better than the true God. But this is no argument that you have no bitter enmity against the true God; for it was your enmity against the true God, and your not liking him, that has put you upon forming up another in your imagination, that you like better. It is your enmity against those attributes of God's holiness and justice, and the like, that has put you upon conceiting another, who is not so holy as he is, and does not hate sin so much, and will not be so strictly just in punishing it; and whose wrath against sin is not so terrible.

But if you were sensible of the vanity of your own conceits, and that God was not such a one as you have imagined; but that he is, as he is indeed, an infinitely holy, just, sin hating, and sin revenging God, who will not tolerate nor endure the worship of idols, you would be much more liable to feel the sensible exercises of enmity against him, than you are now. And this experience confirms. For we see that when men come to be under convictions, and to be made sensible that God is not as they have heretofore imagined; but that he is such a jealous, sin hating God, and whose wrath against sin is so dreadful, they are much more apt to have sensible exercises of enmity against God than before.

4. Your having always been taught that God is infinitely above you, and out of your reach, has prevented your enmity's being exercised in those ways that otherwise it would have been. You have always from your infancy been taught, that God is so high, that you cannot hurt him; that notion has grown up with you. And hence you be not sensible, that you have any disposition to hurt him; because it has been conceived so impossible, that it has not come into your mind. And hence your enmity has not been exercised in revengeful thoughts; because revenge has never found any room here; it has never found any handle to take hold of; there has been no conception of any such thing, and hence it has lain still. A serpent will not bite, or spit poison at that which it sees at a great distance; which if it saw near, would do it immediately. Opportunity shows what men be oftentimes, whether friends or enemies. Opportunity to do, puts men in mind of doing; wakens up such principles as lay dormant before. Opportunity stirs up desire to do, where there was before a disposition that without opportunity would have lain still. If a man has had an old grudge against another, and has a fair opportunity to be revenged, this will revive his malice, and waken up a desire of revenge.

If a great and sovereign prince injures a poor man, and though what he does is looked upon very cruel, that will not ordinarily stir up that passionate revenge, as if he sustained no bigger an injury from one of his equals, because he is so much above him, and out of his reach. Many a man that has appeared calm and meek when he has had no power in his hands, and has not appeared, either to himself or others, to have any disposition to these and those cruel acts; that yet afterwards, when he came to have opportunity by unexpected advancement or otherwise, has appeared like a ravenous wolf, or devouring lion. So it was with Hazael. "And Hazael said, Why weepeth my lord? And he answered, Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel:

their strong holds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash their children, and rip up their women with child. And Hazael said, But what! is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing? And Elisha answered, The Lord hath showed me that thou shalt be king over Syria," 2 Kings viii. 12, 13. Hazael was then a servant; he had no power in his hands to do as he pleased; and so that cruel disposition that was in him had lain hid, and he did not himself imagine that it was there: but afterwards, when he became king of Syria and was absolute, and had none to control him; then it broke out and appeared, and he did as the prophet had foretold. He committed those very acts of cruelty, that he thought it was not in his heart to do. And it was want of opportunity that was the thing that made the difference. It was all in his heart before: he was such a dog then as to do this thing, but only had not had opportunity. And therefore when he seemed surprised that the prophet should say so of him, all the reason the prophet gives is, "The Lord hath showed me that thou shalt be king over Syria."

And some natural men are such dogs as to do things, if they had opportunity, which they do not imagine it is in their hearts to do. You object against your having a mortal hatred against God; that you never felt any desire to kill him. But one reason has been, that it has always been conceived so impossible by you, and you have been so sensible how such desires would be in vain, that it has kept down such a desire. But if the life of God were within your reach, and you knew it, it would not be safe one hour. Who knows what thoughts would presently arise in your heart by such an opportunity, and what disposition would be raised up in your heart? Who would trust your heart, that there would not presently be such thoughts as these, though they are enough to make one tremble to mention them? "Now I have opportunity to set myself at liberty--that I need not be kept in continual slavery by the strict law of God. Then I may take my liberty to walk in that way I like best, and need not be continually in such slavish fear of God's displeasure. And God has not done well by me in many instances. He has done most unjustly by me, in holding me bound to destruction for unbelief, and other things which I cannot help.—He has shown mercy to others, and refused it to me. I have now an opportunity to deliver myself, and there can be no danger of my being hurt for it: God will not be alive to revenge it. And then there will be no God for us to be terrified about, and so keep us in slavery."

Who would trust your heart, that such thoughts would not arise? And others much more horrid! Too dreadful to be mentioned! And therefore I forbear. Those natural men are foolishly insensible of what is in their own hearts, who think there would be no danger of any such workings of heart, if they knew they had opportunity.

5. You little consider how much your having no more of the sensible exercises of hatred to God, is owing to a being restrained by fear. You have always been taught what a dreadful thing it is to hate God. And you have been taught what a dreadful being God is, and how terrible God's displeasure is; that God sees the heart, and knows all the thoughts; and that you are in his hands, and he can make you as miserable as he pleases, and as soon as he pleases. And these things have restrained you: and the fear that has risen from these things, has kept you from appearing what you are; it has kept down your enmity, and made that serpent afraid to show its head, as otherwise it would do. If a man were wholly under the power of an enemy, though he were never so much of an enemy to him, he would be afraid to exercise his

hatred in outward acts, unless it were with great disguise.—And if it be supposed that such an enemy, in whose power he was, could see his heart, and know all his thoughts, and apprehended that he would put him to a terrible death, if he saw the workings of malice there, how greatly would this restrain! He would be afraid so much as to believe himself, that he hated his enemy; but there would be all manner of smothering, disguise, and hypocrisy, and feigning even of thoughts and affections.

Thus your enmity has been kept under restraint; and thus it has been from your infancy. You have grown up in it, so that it has become an habitual restraint. You dare not so much as think you hate God. If you do exercise hatred, you have a disguise for it, whereby you endeavor even to hide it from your own conscience; and so have all along deceived yourself. And your deceit is very old and habitual; and hence you are so difficultly convinced. But this has been only restraint: it has been no mortification. But there has been an enmity against God in its full strength. It has been only restrained like an enemy that durst not rise up and show himself.

6. One reason why you have not felt more sensible hatred to God, may be because you have not had much trial of what is in your heart. It may be God has hitherto in a great measure, let you alone. The enmity that is in men's hearts against God, is like a serpent, which, if he be let alone, lies still; but if any body disturbs it, will soon hiss, and be enraged, and show its serpentine spiteful nature.

Notwithstanding the good opinion you have of yourself, yet a little trial would show you to be a viper, and your heart would be set all on rage against God. One thing that restrains you now is your hope. You hope to receive many things from God. Your own interest is concerned; you hope to make great gains of God. So that both hope and fear operate together, to restrain your enmity from such sensible exercises as otherwise would be. But if once hope were gone, you would soon show what you were: you would soon feel your enmity against God in a rage.

7. If you pretend that you do not feel enmity against God, and yet act as an enemy, you may certainly conclude, that it is not because you are no enemy, but because you do not know your own heart. Actions are the best interpreters of the disposition; they show, better than any thing else, what the heart is. It must be because you do not observe your own behavior, that you question whether you are an enemy to God.

What other account can you give of your own carriage, but only your being God's enemy? What other can be given of your so opposing God in your ways; walking so exceeding contrary to him, contrary to his counsels, contrary to his commands, and contrary to his glory? What other account can be given of your casting so much contempt upon God; your setting him so low; your acting so much against his authority, and against his kingdom and interest in the world? What other account can be given of your so setting your will in opposition to God's will, and that so obstinately, for so long a time, against so many warnings as you have had? What other account can be given of your joining so much with Satan, in the opposition he is making to the kingdom of God in the world? And that you will join with him against God, though it be so much against your own interest, and though you expose yourself by it to everlasting misery?

Such like behavior in one man towards another, would be looked on as sufficient evidence of a man's being an enemy to another. If he should be seen to behave thus from time to time, and that it was his constant manner, none would

want any better evidence, that he was an enemy to his neighbor. If you your self had a servant that carried it towards you, as you do towards God, you would not think there was need of any greater evidence of his being your enemy. If your servant should manifest so much contempt of you; should disregard your commands as much as you do the commands of God; and should go so directly contrary; should in so many ways act the very reverse of your commands; and should seem to set himself in ways that were contrary to your will so obstinately and incorrigibly, without any amendment from your repeated calls and warnings, and threatenings; and should act so cross to you day and night, as you do to God; when you sought one thing, he would seek the contrary; when you did any work, he would, as much as in him lay, undo and destroy your work; and should continually drive at such ends, as tended to overthrow the ends you aimed at; when you sought to bring to pass any design, he would endeavor to overthrow your design; and should set himself as much against your interest, as you do yourself against God's honor. And you should moreover see him, from time to time, with others that were your declared mortal enemies; and making them his counsellors as much as you do the devils, God's declared mortal enemies; and hearkening to their counsels, as much as you do to Satan's temptations: should you not think you had sufficient evidence that he was your enemy indeed?

Therefore consider seriously your own ways, and weigh your own behavior. "How canst thou say, I am not polluted? See thy way in the valley, know what thou hast done," Jer. ii. 23.

Object. II. Natural men may be ready to object, the respect they show to God, from time to time. This makes many to think that they are far from being such enemies to God. They carry it respectfully towards God: they pray to him in secret, and do it in as humble a manner as they are able. They attend on public worship, and take a great deal of pains to do it in a decent manner. It seems to them that they show God a great deal of respect; they use many very respectful terms in their prayer; they give him all the honor they can; they are respectful in their manner of speaking, and in their voice, and their gestures, and the like.

But to this, I

Answer, That all this is done in mere hypocrisy. All this seeming respect is feigned, there is no sincerity in it; there is external respect, but no respect in the heart; there is a show, and nothing else. You only cover your enmity with a painted vail. You put on the disguise of a friend, but in your heart you are a mortal enemy for all that. There is external honor, but inward contempt; there is a show of friendship and regard, but inward hatred. You do but deceive yourself with your show of respect, and endeavor to deceive God; not considering God looks not on the outward appearance, but he looks on the heart.

Here consider particularly,

1. That much of that seeming respect which natural men show to God, is owing to their education. They have been taught from their infancy that they ought to show great respect to God. They have been taught to use respectful language, when speaking about God, and to behave with solemnity, when attending on those exercises of religion, wherein they have to do with God. They, from their childhood, have seen that it is the manner of others, when they pray to God, to use reverential expressions, and a reverential behavior before him. And their show of respect, which they make to God, is owing, in a great measure, to this.

Those who are brought up in places where they have commonly, from their

infancy, heard men take the name of God in vain, and swear, and curse, and blaspheme; they learn to do the same, and it becomes habitual to them so to do. And it is the same way, and no other, that you have learned to behave respectfully towards God; not that you have any more respect to God than they; but they have been brought up one way, and you another. In some parts of the world, men are brought up in the worship of idols of silver, and gold, and wood, and stone, made in the shape of men and beasts. "They say of them, Let the men that sacrifice, kiss the calves," Hos. xiii. 2. In some parts of the world they are brought up to worship serpents, and are taught from their infancy to carry it with great respect to them. And in some places they are brought up in worshipping the devil, who appears to them in a bodily shape; and to behave with a show of great reverence and honor towards him. And what respect you show to God has no better foundation; it comes the same way, and is worth no more.

2. That show of respect which you make is forced. You come to God, and make a great show of respect to him, and use very respectful terms, with a respectful, reverential tone and manner of speaking; and your countenance is grave and solemn; and you put on a humble aspect; and you kneel, and use humble, respectful postures, out of fear. You are afraid that God will execute his wrath upon you; and so you feign a great deal of respect, that he may not be angry with you. "Through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee," Psal. lxvi. 3. In the original it is, "shall thine enemies lie to thee." It is rendered therefore in the margin, "shall yield feigned obedience unto thee." All that you do in religion is forced and feigned. Through the greatness of God's power, you yield feigned obedience. You are in God's power, and he is able to destroy you; and so you feign a great deal of respect to him, that he might not destroy you. As one might do towards an enemy that had taken him captive, though he at the same time would gladly make his escape, if he could, by taking away the life of him who had taken him captive.

3. It is not real respect that moves you to behave so towards God; you do it because you hope you shall get by it. It is respect to yourself, and not respect to God, that moves you. You hope to move God to bestow the rewards of his children by it. You are like the Jews who followed Christ, and called him Rabbi, and would make him a king. Not that they honored him so much in their hearts, as to think him worthy of the honor of a king, or that they had the respect of sincere subjects; but they did it for the sake of the loaves. "Jesus perceived that they would come and take him by force to make him a king. And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither? Jesus answered, and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because you saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled," John vi. 15—25, 26.

These things do not argue but that you are implacable enemies to God notwithstanding. If you examine your prayers and other duties, your own consciences will tell you that the seeming respect which you have shown to God in them, has been only in hypocrisy. That oftentimes you have set forth in your prayers, that God was a great God, and glorious God, an infinitely holy God, as if you greatly honored him on the account of these attributes; and you, at the same time, had no sense in your heart of the greatness and gloriousness of God, or of any excellency in his holiness. And so your own consciences will tell you, that you have often pretended to be thankful; you have told God, that you thanked him that you was alive, and thanked him for these and those mercies, when you have not found the least jot of thankfulness in your heart.

And so you have told God of your own unworthiness, and set forth what a vile creature you was, when you have had no humble sense of your own unworthiness.

And if these forementioned restraints were thrown off, you would soon throw off all your show of respect. Take away fear, and take away a regard to your own interest, and there would soon be an end to all those appearances of love, honor and reverence, which now you make. All these things are not at all inconsistent with the most implacable enmity.

The devil himself made a show of respect to Christ when he was afraid that he was going to torment him; and when he hoped to persuade Christ to spare him longer. "When he saw Jesus he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high? I beseech thee torment me not." Luke viii. 28.

Object. III. Some may perhaps object against this doctrine of their being God's enemies, the religious affections they have sometimes experienced. They may be ready to say, that when they have come before God in prayer, they have not only used respectful terms and gestures, but they have prayed with affection; their prayers have been attended with tears, which they are ready to think showed something in the heart.

Answer. These affections have risen from other causes, and not from any true respect to God.

As particularly,

1. They have risen from self-love, and not love to God. If you have wept before God, from the consideration of our own pitiful case, that has been because you loved yourself, and not because you had any respect to God. And if your tears have been from sorrow for your sins, you have mourned for your sins, because you have sinned against yourself, and not because you have sinned against God. "When you fasted and mourned, did ye at all fast unto me, even unto Me?" Zech. vii. 5.

2. Pride and a good thought of themselves, very commonly has a great hand in the affections of natural men. They have a good opinion of what they are doing when they are praying; and the reflection on that affects them; they are affected with their own goodness. Man's self-righteousness often occasions tears. A high opinion of themselves before God, and an imagination of their being persons of great account with him, has affected them in their transactions with God.

There is commonly abundance of pride in the midst of tears, and pride is, in a great measure, the source of them. And then they are so far from being an argument that you be not an enemy to God, that on the contrary, they are an argument that you be. In your very tears, you are in a vain conceit of yourself, exalting yourself against God.

3. The affections of natural men do often arise from wrong conceits that they have of God. They conceive of God, after the manner they do of men, as though he were a being liable to be wrought upon in his affections. They conceive of him as one whose heart could be drawn, whose affections can be overcome by what he sees in them. They conceive of him as being taken with them and their performances; and this works on their affections; and thus one tear draws another, and their affections increase by reflection. And oftentimes they conceive of God as one that loves them, and is a friend to them; and such a mistake may work much on their affections. But such affections that arise towards God, as they conceit him to be, is no argument that they have not the same implacable hatred towards God, considered as he really is. There is no

concluding that men are not enemies, because they are affected and shed tears in their prayers, and the like. Saul was very much affected when David expostulated with him about pursuing after him, and seeking to kill him. David's words wrought exceedingly upon Saul's affections. "And it came to pass when David had made an end of speaking these words unto Saul, that Saul said, Is this thy voice, my son David? And Saul lifted up his voice and wept," 1 Sam. xxiv. 16, and chap. xxvi. 1, &c. He was so affected that he wept aloud, and called David his son, though he was just before seeking his life. But this affection of Saul's was no argument that he did not still continue in his enmity against David. He was David's mortal enemy before, and sought his life, and so he did afterwards. It was but a pang; his enmity was not mortified or done away. The next news we hear of Saul is, that he was pursuing David, and seeking his life again.

APPLICATION.

This shall be of instruction, in several inferences.

Inf. I. If it be so that natural men are God's enemies, then hence we may learn, how much we are indebted to God for his restraining grace. If all natural men are God's enemies, what would they not do if they were not restrained? For what has one that is an enemy within himself, or in his disposition, to restrain him from acting against him that he is an enemy to? Hatred will not restrain a man from acting any thing whatsoever against him that is hated. Nothing is too bad for hatred, if it be mere hatred, and no love; nothing is too bad for that to do towards the object of it. Hatred shows no kindness either in doing or forbearing. Only hatred will never make a man forbear to act any thing whatsoever against God; for the very nature of hatred is to seek evil. But wicked men, as has been shown, are mere enemies to God. They have hatred, without any love at all. And hence natural men have nothing within them, in their own nature, to restrain them from any thing that is bad, be it never so bad; and therefore their restraint must not be owing to nature, but to restraining grace. And therefore, whatever wickedness we have been kept from, it is not because we have not been bad enough to commit it; but it is God has restrained us, and kept us back from sin. There can be no worse principle than a principle of hatred to God. The devils in hell do not do any thing from any worse principle than this. And there can be no principle that will go further in wickedness than this, if it be neither mortified nor restrained. But it is not mortified in natural men; and therefore all that keeps them from any degree of wickedness is restrained. If we have seen others do things that we never did; and if they have done worse than we, this is owing to restraining grace. If we have not done as bad as Pharaoh, it is owing to divine restraints. If we have not done as bad as Judas, or as the Scribes and Pharisees, or as bad as Herod, or Simon Magus, it is because God has restrained our corruption. If we have ever heard or read of any that have done worse than we; if we have not gone the length in sinning that the most wicked pirates or carnal persecutors have gone, this is owing to restraining grace. For we are all naturally the enemies of God as much as they. If we have not committed the unpardonable sin, it is owing to restraining grace. There is no worse principle in exercise in that sin, than enmity against God. There is the entire fountain, and all the foundation of the sin against the Holy Ghost, in that enmity against God that we all have in us, and naturally reigns in us.

It is not we ourselves that restrain ourselves from the commission of the

greatest imaginable wickedness; for enmity against God reigns in us and over us; we are under the power and dominion of it, and are sold under it. We do not restrain that which reigns over us. A slave, as long as he continues a mere slave, cannot control his master. "He that committeth sin, is the servant of sin," Job viii. 34. So that the restraint of this our cruel tyrant is owing to God and not to us. What does a poor impotent subject do to restrain the absolute lord that has him wholly under his power?

How much will it appear that the world is indebted to the restraining grace of God, if we consider that the world is full of enemies to God! The world is full of inhabitants; and almost all are God's enemies, his implacable and mortal enemies. What therefore would they not do; what work would they not make if God did not restrain them?

God's work in the restraint that he exercises over a wicked world, is a glorious work. God's holding the reins upon the corruptions of a wicked world and setting bounds to their wickedness, is a more glorious work than his ruling the raging of the sea, and setting bounds to its proud waves, and saying, *hitherto shalt thou come and no further.* In hell God lets the wickedness of wicked spirits have the reins to rage without restraint; and it would be in a great measure upon earth as it is in hell, did not God restrain the wickedness of the world.

But in order to the better understanding how it is owing to the restraining grace of God, that we are kept and withheld from the highest acts of sin, I would here observe several things.

1. Whenever men are withheld from sinning by the common influence of God's Spirit, they are withheld by restraining grace. If sinners are awakened sinners, and are made sensible of the great guilt that sin brings, and that it exposes to a dreadful punishment; they, under such circumstances, dare not allow themselves in wilful sin: God restrains them by the convictions of his Spirit; and therein their being kept from sin is owing to restraining grace. And sinners that live under the gospel, that are not awakened sinners, but in a great measure secure, yet commonly have some degrees of the influence of God's Spirit, with his ordinances influencing natural conscience. And though they be not sufficient thoroughly to rouse them out of security, or make them reform, yet they keep them from going such lengths in sin, as otherwise they might do. And when it is thus, this is restraining grace. They are very stupid and sottish, yet they would be a great deal more so, if God should let them wholly alone.

2. All the restraints that men are under from the word and ordinances, is from restraining grace. The word and ordinances of God might have some degree of influence on men's natural principles of self-love, to restrain them from sin, without any degree of the influence of God's Spirit; but this would be the restraining grace of God; for God's goodness to a sinful world, appears in his giving his word to be a restraint on the wickedness of the world. When men are restrained by fear of those punishments that the word of God threatens; or by the warnings of the word, or by the offers and promises of it; when the word of God works upon hope, or upon fear, or natural conscience, to restrain men from sin, this is the restraining grace of God. When we are restrained thus, it is owing to the mercy of God that we are restrained. It is an instance of God's mercy, that he has revealed hell to restrain men's wickedness; and that he has revealed a way of salvation and a possibility of eternal life. This is a thing that has great influence on men to restrain them from sin; and this is the restraining grace of God.

3. When men are restrained from sin by the light of nature, this also is re-

straining grace. If men are destitute of the light of God's word, yet the light of natural conscience teaches, that sin brings guilt, and exposes to punishment. The light of nature teaches, that there is a God who governs the world, and will reward the good and punish the evil. When men are restrained by this, they are to attribute their restraints to the restraining grace of God; for it is God who is the author of the light of nature, as well as the light of revelation. He in mercy to mankind, makes known many things by natural light to work upon men's fear and self-love to restrain their corruptions.

4. When God restrains men's corruptions by his providence, this is restraining grace. And that whether it be his general providence, or his providence in ordering the state of mankind; or his particular providence, or providential disposals towards them in particular.

(1.) God doth greatly restrain the corruption of the world by ordering the state of mankind. He has set mankind here in a mortal state, and that is a great restraint on their corruption. He hath set mankind in a state of probation for eternity, and that is a great restraint to corruption. God hath so ordered the state of mankind, that ordinarily many kinds of sin and wickedness are disgraceful, and what tend to the hurt of a man's character and reputation amongst his fellow men; and that is a great restraint. He hath so disposed the world that many kinds of wickedness are many ways very contrary to men's temporal interest; and that is a great restraint. God has so disposed the state of mankind, that they are led to prohibit many kinds of wickedness by human laws; and that is a great restraint. God hath set up a church in the world, made of those, who, if they are answerable to their profession, have the fear and love of God in their hearts; and they, by holding forth light and the word of God, and keeping up the ordinances of God in the world, and by warning others, are a great restraint to the wickedness of the world.

But in all these things the restraining grace of God appears. It is God's mercy to mankind, that he has so ordered their state, that they should have so many things, by fear and a regard to their own interest, to restrain their corruptions. It is God's mercy to the world, that the state of mankind here does so differ in that respect from the state of the damned in hell; where men will have none of these things to restrain them: they will not be in such circumstances that will so influence their hope and fear to restrain them from sin.

The wisdom of God, as well as the attributes of God's grace, greatly appears in thus disposing things for the restraining the wickedness of men.

(2.) God doth greatly restrain the corruptions of men by his particular providence, or providence towards particular persons, by placing men in such circumstances as to lay them under restraints. And to this it is often owing that some natural men never go such lengths in sinning, or are never guilty of such atrocious wickedness as some others, that Providence has placed in different circumstances. If it were not for this, many thousands of natural men, who now live sober and orderly lives, would do as Pharaoh did. The reason why they do not, is, that Providence has placed them in different circumstances. If they were in the same circumstances as Pharaoh was in, they would do as he did. And so, if in the same circumstances as Manasseh, as Judas, as Nero. But Providence restrains their corruptions, by putting them in such circumstances as not to open such a door or outlet for their corruptions as he did to them. So some do not do such horrid things as others; they do not live such horribly vicious lives as some others, because Providence has restrained them, by ordering that they should have a better education than others. Providence has ordered that they should be the children of pious parents, it may be, or should live where

they should enjoy many means of grace; and so Providence has laid them under restraints. Now this is restraining grace. The attribute of God's grace is exercised in thus restraining persons in providence.

And oftentimes God restrains men's corruptions by particular events of providence. By particular affections they are brought under, or by particular occurrences, whereby God does, as it were, block up men's way in their course of sin or in some wickedness that they had devised, and that otherwise they would perpetrate. Or something happens unexpected, to hold men back from that which they were about to commit. When men are restrained thus, it is God that restrains them. Thus God restrained David by his providence from shedding blood as he intended to do. "Now therefore, my lord, as the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, seeing the Lord hath withholden thee from coming to shed blood, and from avenging thyself with thine own hand," 1 Sam. xxv. 26. God withheld it from him no otherwise than by ordering it so in his providence, that Abigail should come, and by her wisdom should cool and pacify him, and persuade him to alter his purpose. See verses 32, 33, 34.

5. Godly persons are greatly indebted to restraining grace, in keeping them from dreadful acts of sin. So it was in that instance of David, that has been just mentioned. Godly persons, when God has left, and has not restrained them, have fallen into dreadful acts of sin. So did David in the case of Uriah, Lot, Peter. And when other godly persons are kept from falling into such sins, or much worse sins than these, it is owing to the restraining grace of God. Merely having a principle of grace in their hearts, or merely their being godly persons, without God's presence to restrain them, will not keep them from great acts of sin. That the godly do not fall into the most horrid sins that can be conceived of, is owing, not so much to any inconsistence between their falling into such sins, and the having the principle of grace in the heart, as it is owing to the covenant mercy of God, whereby he has promised never to leave nor forsake his people; and that he will not suffer them to be tempted above what they are able; but with the temptation will make a way for them to escape. If saving grace restrains men from great acts of sin, this is owing to God, who gives such exercises of grace at that time when the temptation comes, that they are restrained.

Let not the godly therefore be insensible of their indebtedness to the restraining grace of God. Though the godly cannot be said to be enemies to God, because a principle of enmity does not reign; yet they have the very same principle and seed of enmity in them, though it be mortified. Though it be not in reigning power, yet it has great strength; and is too strong for them without God's almighty power to help them against it. Though they be not enemies to God, because they have another principle, besides a principle of enmity, viz., a principle of love, yet their old man, the body of sin and death, that yet remains in them, is a mortal enemy to God. Corruption in the godly is not a whit better than it is in the wicked. The corruption in them is of as bad a nature every whit as that which is in a mortal enemy to God: it aims at the life of God wherever it is. And though it be not in reigning power, yet it would dreadfully rage were it not for God's restraining grace.

God gives his restraining grace to both natural men and godly men; but only there is this difference. God gives his restraining grace to his children in the way of covenant mercy; it is part of the mercy promised to them in his covenant. God is faithful, and will not leave them to sin in like manner as wicked men do, otherwise they would do every whit as bad.

Let not therefore the godly attribute it to themselves, or merely to their own

goodness, that they are not guilty of such horrid crimes as they hear of in others: let them consider, it is not owing to them, but to God's restraints.

Thus all, both godly and ungodly, may learn from this doctrine, their great indebtedness to the restraining grace of God.

I now proceed to

Inf. II. Hence we may learn the reason why natural men will not come to Christ: for they do not come because they will not come. "*Ye will not come to me that ye might have life*," John v. 40. When we say that natural men are not willing to come to Christ, it is not meant that they are not willing to be delivered from hell; for without doubt, no natural man is willing to go to hell. Nor is it meant that they are not willing that Christ should keep them from going to hell. Without doubt, natural men that are under awakenings do often greatly desire this. But if they do desire it, this does not argue that they are willing to come to Christ; for notwithstanding their desire to be delivered from hell, yet their hearts do not close with Christ, but are averse to him. They see nothing in Christ wherefore they should desire him; no beauty nor comeliness to draw or incline their hearts to him. And they are not willing to take Christ as he is; they would fain divide Christ. There are some things in him that they like, and others that they greatly dislike; but consider him as he is, and as he is offered to them in the gospel, and they will not have him. They are not willing to accept of Christ as he is offered; for in doing so, they must of necessity part with all their sins; they must sell the world, and part with their own righteousness. But they are not willing to do that; they had rather, for the present, run the venture of going to hell than do that.

When men are truly willing to come to Christ, they are freely willing. It is not what they are forced and driven to by threatenings; but they are willing to come, and choose to come without being driven. But natural men have no such free willingness; but, on the contrary, have an aversion. And the ground of it is that which we have heard, viz., that they are enemies to God. Their having such a reigning enmity against God, makes them obstinately refuse to come to Christ. If a man is an enemy to God, he will necessarily be an enemy to Christ too; for Christ is the Son of God; he is infinitely near to God, yea he is God. He has the nature of God, as well as the nature of man. He is a Saviour appointed of God. God anointed him, and sent him into the world. And in doing what he did in the work of redemption, he wrought the works of God. He always did those things that pleased God; and all that he does as a Saviour, is to the glory of God. And one great thing that he aimed at in his redemption, was to deliver them from their idols which they had chosen, and bring them to God. The case being so, and sinners being enemies to God, they will necessarily be opposite to coming to Christ; for Christ is of God, and as a Saviour, seeks to bring them to God only: but natural men are not of God, but are averse to him

Inf. III. From this doctrine we may learn, how dreadful the condition of natural men is. Their state is a state of enmity with God. If we consider what God is, and what men are, it will be easy for us to conclude, that such men as are God's enemies, must be miserable. Consider, ye that are enemies to God, how great a God he is that ye are enemies to. He is the eternal God: the God that fills heaven and earth, and whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain. He is the God that made you; the God in whose hand your breath is, and whose are all your ways; the God in whom you live, and move, and have your being; the God who has your soul and body in his hands every moment.

You would look on yourself as in very unhappy circumstances, if your neighbors were all your enemies, and none of your fellow creatures were your friends. If every body were set against you, and all despised and hated you, you would be ready to think, you had better be out of the world than in it. But if it be such a calamity to have enmity maintained between you and your fellow creatures, what is it when you and the Almighty God are enemies one to another? What avails either the friendship or enmity of your neighbors, poor little worms of the dust, that are about you, in comparison of the friendship or enmity of the great God of heaven and earth?

Consider:

(1.) If you continue in your enmity a little longer, there will be a mutual enmity between God and you to all eternity. God will appear to be your dreadful and irreconcilable enemy. And you know not how soon it will come to this. If you should die an enemy to God, there will be no such thing as any reconciliation after death. God will then appear in hatred of you. As you are a mere enemy to God, so God will then appear a mere enemy to you; he will appear in perfect hatred without any love, and without any pity, and without any mercy at all. As you hate God, he will hate you. And that will be verified of you: *My soul loathed them, and their soul abhorred me*, Zech. xi. 8. And then God will be your enemy forever. If you be not reconciled so as to become his friend in this life, God will never become your friend after death. If you continue an enemy to God till death, God will continue an enemy to you to all eternity. There will nothing avail to reconcile God to you hereafter. You will find that you cannot move the heart of God by any of your cries. You will have no mediator offered you; there will be no day's man betwixt you. So that it becomes you to consider what it will be to have God your enemy to all eternity, without any possibility of being reconciled.

Consider, what it will be to have this enmity to be mutual or maintained forever on both sides. For as God will forever continue an enemy to you, so you will forever continue an enemy to God. If you continue God's enemy until death, you will always be his enemy. And after death your enmity will have no restraint, but it will break out and rage without control. When you come to be a firebrand of hell, you will be a firebrand in two respects, viz., as you will be all on fire, full of the fire of God's wrath: and also as you will be all on a blaze with spite and malice towards God. You will be as full of the fire of malice, as you will with the fire of divine vengeance; and both will make you full of torment. Then you will appear as you are, a viper indeed. You are now a viper, but under great disguise; a wolf in sheep's clothing; but then your mask will be pulled off; you shall lose your garments, and walk naked, Rev. xvi. 15. Then will you as a serpent, spit poison at God, and vent your rage and malice in fearful blasphemies. Out of that mouth, out of which, when you open it, will proceed flames, will also proceed dreadful blasphemies against God. That same tongue, to cool which you will wish for a drop of water, will be eternally employed in cursing and blaspheming God and Christ. And that not from any new corruption being put into your heart, but only from God's withdrawing his hand from restraining your old corruption. And what a miserable way will this be of spending your eternity!

(2.) Consider what will be the consequence of a mutual enmity between God and you, if it be continued. Now you find yourself left alone; you find no very terrible event, but there will be great changes. Though hitherto you have met with no very great changes, yet they will come. After a little while, dying time will come; and then what will be the consequences of this enmity? God,

whose enemy you are, has the frame of your body in his hands. Your times are in his hand; and he it is that appoints your bounds. And when he sends death to arrest you, and change your countenance, and dissolve your frame, and take you away from all your earthly friends, and from all that is dear and pleasant to you in the world; what will be the issue then of God and you being enemies one to another? Will not you then stand in need of God's help? Would not he be the best friend in such a case, worth more than ten thousand earthly friends? If God be your enemy, then whom will you betake yourself to for a friend? When you launch forth into the boundless gulf of eternity, then you will need some friend to take care of you; but if God be your enemy, where will you betake yourself? Your soul must go naked into another world, in eternal separation from all worldly things; and you will not be able to dispose of yourself; your soul will not be in its own power to defend or dispose of itself. Will you not then need to have God for a friend, into whose hands you may commend your spirit? And how dreadful will it be to have God for your enemy then!

The time is coming when the frame of this world shall be dissolved. Christ shall descend in the clouds of heaven, in the glory of his Father; and you, with all the rest of mankind, must stand before the judgment seat of God. Then what will be the consequence of this mutual enmity between God and you? If God be your enemy, who will stand your friend? Who else will be able to help you, and what will you do? And what will be the event of God's being your enemy then? Now, it may be, it does not appear to be very terrible to you to have God for your enemy; but when such changes as these are brought to pass, it will greatly alter the appearance of things. Then God's favor will appear to you of infinite worth. They, and they only will then appear happy, who have the love of God; and then you will know that God's enemies are miserable.

But under this head consider more particularly several things.

(1.) What God can do to his enemies. Or rather, what can he not do? How miserable can he, who is almighty, make his enemies, and those that he is an enemy to! Consider, you that are enemies to God, whether or no you shall be able to make your part good with him. "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?" 1 Cor. x. 22. Have you such a conceit of your own strength as that you think to try it out with God? Do you intend to run the risk of an encounter with him? Do you imagine that your hands can be strong, or your heart endure? Do you think you shall be well able to defend yourself? Or will you be able to escape out of his hand? Or do you think to harden your own heart and fortify yourself with courage, and set yourself to bear? And do you think that you shall be able to uphold your spirits when God acts as an enemy towards you? If so, then gird up your loins and prepare to meet God, and see what the event will be. Therefore thus will I do unto thee—"And because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God," Amos iv. 12. Is it not in vain to set the briers and thorns in battle against God? Is it not like setting dry briers and thorns in battle array against devouring flames; which, though they seem to be armed with natural weapons, yet the fire will pass through them, and burn them together? See Isa. xxvii. 4.

And if you endeavor to support yourself under God's wrath, cannot God lay so much upon you as to sink and crush you? Cannot he lay you under such misery as to cause your spirit quite to fail; so that you shall find no strength to resist him, or to uphold yourself? Why should a little worm

think of supporting himself against an omnipotent adversary? Has not he that made you, and gave you your strength, and your courage, got your strength and courage in his hands? Is it a hard thing for him to overcome it? Consider God has made your soul; and he that made it knows how to punish it to what degree he will. He can fill it with misery; he can bring what degree of sorrow, and anguish, and horror he will. And he that made your body can bring what torments he will upon it. He has made every vein and sinew; and has every one in his hands, and he can fill every one as full of torments as he will. God, who made you, has given you a capacity to bear torment; and he has that capacity in his hands; and he can enlarge it, and make you capable of more misery, as much more as he will. If God hates any one, and sets himself against him as his enemy, what cannot he do with him? How dreadful must it be to fall into the hands of such an enemy! Surely, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," Heb. x. 31.

2. If God be your mere enemy, you may rationally conclude that he will act as such in his dealings with you. We have already observed that you are a mere enemy to God; that is, have enmity without any love or true respect. So, if you continue to be so, God will appear to be your mere enemy; and will be so forever without being reconciled. But if it be so, he will doubtless act as such. If he eternally hates you, he will act in his dealings with you as one that hates you with mere hatred, without any love or pity. The proper tendency and aim of hatred, is the misery of the object hated; misery, and nothing else. So that you may expect God will make you miserable, and that you will not be spared; for sparing is not the effect of hatred, but of pity and mercy, which is a quite different thing from enmity.

Now God does not act as your mere enemy; if he corrects you, it is in measure. He now exercises abundance of mercy to you. He threatens you now, but it is in a way of warning, and so in a merciful way. He now calls and invites, and strives with you, and waits to be gracious to you. But hereafter there will be an end of all these things: in another world God will cease to show you mercy.

3. If you will continue God's enemy, you may rationally conclude that God will deal with you so as to make it appear how dreadful it is to have God for an enemy. It is very dreadful to have a mighty prince for an enemy. *The wrath of a king is as the roaring of a lion*, Prov. xix. 12. But if the wrath of a man, a fellow worm, be so terrible, what is the wrath of God! And God will doubtless show it to be immensely more dreadful. If you will be an enemy, God will make you know that it is not a light thing to be an enemy to him, and have him for an enemy to you. God will doubtless glorify himself as an enemy, in his dealings with those to whom he is an enemy. That is, he will act so as to glorify those attributes which he exercises as an enemy; which are his majesty, his power and justice. God will deal so with you as to glorify these attributes in your destruction. His great majesty, his awful justice, and mighty power, shall be showed upon you. "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction," Rom. ix. 22.

4.) Consider what God has said he will do to his enemies. He has declared that they shall not escape, but that he will surely punish them: "Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies, thy right hand shall find out all those that hate thee," Psal. xxi 8. "And repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him

to his face," Deut. vii. 10. "The Lord shall wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of such a one as goeth on still in his trespasses," Psal. lxviii. 21.

Yea, God hath sworn, that he will be avenged on them; and that in a most awful and dreadful manner. "For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live forever. If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and I will reward them that hate me. I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh; and that with the blood of the slain—from the beginning of revenges on the enemy," Deut. xxxii. 40, 41, 42. The terribleness of that destruction that God will bring on his enemies, is here variously set forth. As particularly in God's "whetting his glittering sword," as one that prepares himself to do some great execution. "His hands take hold on judgment," to signify that he will surely reward them as they deserve. "He will render vengeance to his enemies, and reward them that hate him," i. e., he will render their full reward; he will not fail or come short. As in the forementioned place it was said he would not be slack in this matter, "I will make mine arrows drunk with blood," this signifies the greatness of the destruction. It shall not be a little of their blood that shall satisfy; but his arrows shall be glutted with their blood. "And his sword shall devour flesh." That is, it shall make dreadful waste of it. Hereby is very lively set forth the terrible manner in which God will one day rise up and execute vengeance on his enemies.

Again, the totality and perfection of their destruction is represented in the following words: "The wicked shall perish, the enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs, they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away," Psal. xxxvii. 20. The fat of lambs, when it is burnt in the fire, burns all up; there is not so much as a cinder left; it all consumes into smoke. This is made use of here to represent the perfect destruction of God's enemies in his wrath. So God hath promised Christ, that he would make his enemies his footstool, Psal. cx. 1; i. e., he would pour the greatest contempt upon them, and as it were tread them under foot.

Consider that all these things will be executed on you if you continue God's enemies.

Inf. IV. If it be so, that natural men are God's enemies, hence we may learn how justly God may refuse to show you mercy. For is God obliged to show mercy to his enemies? Is God bound to set his love on them that have no love to him; but hate him with perfect hatred? Is God bound to come and dwell with them that have an aversion to him, and choose to keep at a distance from him, and fly from him as one that is hateful to them? If you earnestly desire the salvation of your soul, is God bound to comply with your desires, when you do always resist and oppose his will? Is God bound to be persuaded and overcome by your prayers, when you are obstinate in your opposition to him, and refuse to yield obedience to him? Is God bound to put honor upon you, and to advance you to such dignity as to be a child of the King of kings, and the heir of the kingdom of glory, while you at the same time have God in the greatest contempt, and set him too low to have the lowest place in your heart? Is God bound to spare your life, and deliver you from eternal death, when you are a mortal enemy to God, and would, if you could, destroy the being of God? Is God obliged to set his great and transcendent love on you, so as to give you benefits purchased by the blood of his own Son, when your heart is all the while full of that enmity that strikes at the life of God?

This doctrine affords a strong argument for the absolute sovereignty of God, with respect to the salvation of sinners. If God is pleased to show mercy to his haters, it is certainly fit that he should do it in a sovereign way, without acting as any way obliged. God will show mercy to his mortal enemies; but then he will not be bound, he will have his liberty to choose the objects of his mercy; to show mercy to what enemy he pleases, and punish and destroy which of his haters he pleases. And certainly this is a fit and reasonable thing. It is fit that God should distribute saving blessings in this way, and in no other, viz., in a sovereign and arbitrary way. And that any body ever thought of, or devised any other way for God to show mercy, than to have mercy on whom he would have mercy, must arise from ignorance of their own hearts, whereby they were insensible what enemies they naturally are to God.

But consider here the following things:

1. How causelessly you are enemies to God. You have no manner of reason for it, either from what God is, or from what he has done. You have no reason for this from what he is, for he is an infinitely lovely and glorious Being; the fountain of all excellency: all that is amiable and lovely in the universe, is originally and eminently in him. Nothing can possibly be conceived of, that could be lovely in God, that is not in him, and that in the greatest possible degree, even infinitely.

And you have no reason for this, from what God has done. For he has been a good and bountiful God to you. He has exercised abundance of kindness to you; has carried you from the womb, preserved your life, taken care of you, and provided for you all your life long. He has exercised great patience and long-suffering toward you. If it had not been for the kindness of God to you, what would have become of you? What would have become of your body? And what, before this time, would have become of your soul? And you are now, every day, and hour, maintained by the goodness and bounty of God. Every new breath you draw, is a new gift of God to you. How causelessly then are you such dreadful enemies to God! And how justly might God, for it, eternally deprive you of all mercy, seeing you do thus requite God for his mercy and kindness to you!

2. Consider how you would resent it, if others were such enemies to you as you are to God. If they had their hearts so full of enmity to you; if they treated you with such contempt, and opposed you, as you do God; and injured you so much as you do God, how would you resent it! Do you not find that you are apt greatly to resent it, when any oppose you, and show an ill spirit towards you? And though you excuse your own enmity against God from your corrupt nature that you brought into the world with you, which you could not help, yet you do not excuse others for being enemies to you from their corrupt nature that they brought into the world, which they could not help; but are ready bitterly to resent it notwithstanding.

Consider therefore, if you, a poor, unworthy, unlovely creature, do so resent it, when you be not loved, but hated, how may God justly resent it when you are enemies to him, an infinitely glorious Being; and a Being from whom you have received so much kindness!

3. How unreasonable it is for you to imagine that you can oblige God to have respect to you by any thing that you can do, continuing still to be his enemy! If you think you have prayed and read, and done considerable for God, yet who cares for the seeming kindness of an enemy?

What value would you yourself set upon it, if a man should seem to carry it respectfully to you, with a fair face, talking smooth, and making a show of

friendship; when you knew, at the same time, that he was inwardly your mortal enemy? Would you look upon yourself obliged for such respect and kindness? Would you not rather abhor it? Would you count such respect to be valued, as Joab's towards Amasa, who took him by the beard, and kissed him, and said, Art thou in health, my brother?—and smote him at the same time under the fifth rib, and killed him!

What if you do pray to God, is God obliged to hear the prayers of an enemy? What if you have taken a great deal of pains, is God obliged to give heaven for the prayers of an enemy? God may justly abhor your prayers, and all that you do in religion, as the flattery of a mortal enemy. No wonder God does not accept any thing from the hands of an enemy.

Inf. V. Hence we may learn how wonderful is the love that is manifested in giving Christ to die for us. For this love is love to enemies. That is taken notice of in the text: "While we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." How wonderful was the love of God the Father in giving such a gift to those, who not only were such as could not be profitable to him, and such as could merit nothing from him, and poor little worms of the dust; but were his enemies, and enemies to so great a degree! They had that enmity that aimed at his life; yet so did he love them, that he gave his own Son to lay down his own life to save their lives. Though they had that enmity that sought to pull God down out of his throne, yet God so loved them, that he sent down Christ from heaven, from his throne there, to be in the form of a servant; and instead of a throne of glory, gave him to be nailed to the cross, and to be laid in the grave, that so we might be brought to a throne of glory.

How wonderful was the love of Christ in thus exercising dying love to his enemies! That he should so love those that hated him, with hatred that sought to take away his life, so as voluntarily to lay down his life, that they might have life through him. "Herein is love; not that we loved him, but that he loved us, and laid down his life for us."

Inf. VI. If we are all naturally God's enemies, hence we may learn what a spirit it becomes us to be of towards our enemies. Though we are enemies to God, yet we hope that God has loved us; and we hope that Christ has died for us; and we hope that God has forgiven or will forgive us, and will do us good, and bestow infinite mercies and blessings upon us, so as to make us happy forever. All this mercy, we hope has been, or will be exercised towards us while enemies.

Certainly then, it will not become us to be bitter in our spirits against those that are enemies to us, and have injured and ill treated us, and though they have yet an ill spirit towards us. Seeing we depend so much on God's forgiving us, though enemies, we should be of a spirit of forgiveness towards our enemies. And therefore our Saviour inserted it in that prayer which he dictated as a general directory to all; "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," to enforce the duty upon us, and to show us how reasonable it is. And we ought to love them even while enemies; for so we hope God hath done to us. We should be the children of our Father, who is kind to the unthankful and evil, Luke vi. 35.

If we refuse thus to do, and we are of another spirit, we may justly expect that God will deny us his mercy, as he has threatened! "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses," Matt. vi. 14, 15. The same we have in the parable of the man who owed his lord ten thousand talents, Matt. xviii. 23—35

SERMON IV.

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH ALONE.

ROMANS IV. 5.—But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

THE following things may be noted in this verse: 1. That justification respects a man as ungodly: this is evident by those words—*that justifieth the ungodly:* which words cannot imply less, than that God, in the act of justification has no regard to any thing in the person justified, as godliness, or any goodness in him; but that nextly or immediately before this act, God beholds him only as an ungodly or wicked creature; so that godliness in the person to be justified is not so antecedent to his justification as to be the ground of it. When it is said that God justifies the ungodly, it is as absurd to suppose that our godliness, taken as some goodness in us, is the ground of our justification, as when it is said that Christ gave sight to the blind, to suppose that sight was prior to, and the ground of that act of mercy in Christ; or as, if it should be said, that such a one by his bounty has made a poor man rich, to suppose that it was the wealth of this poor man that was the ground of this bounty towards him, and was the price by which it was procured.

2. It appears that *by him that worketh not*, in this verse, is not meant only one that does not conform to the ceremonial law, because *he that worketh not*, and *the ungodly*, are evidently synonymous expressions, or what signify the same; it appears by the manner of their connection: if it be not so, to what purpose is the latter expression, *the ungodly*, brought in? The context gives no other occasion for it, but only to show, that the grace of the gospel appears, in that God, in justification, has no regard to any godliness of ours. The foregoing verse is, "Now to him that worketh, is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt." In that verse it is evident that gospel grace, consists in the reward's being given *without works;* and in this verse which immediately follows it, and in sense is connected with it, it is evident that gospel grace consists in a man's being justified that is *ungodly;* by which it is most plain, that by *him that worketh not*, and him that is *ungodly*, are meant the same thing; and that therefore not only works of the ceremonial law are excluded in this business of justification, but works of morality and godliness.

3. It is evident in the words, that by that faith, that is here spoken of, by which we are justified, is not meant the same thing as a course of obedience or righteousness, by the expression by which this faith is here denoted, viz., *believing on him that justifies the ungodly.* They that oppose the Solifidians, as they call them, do greatly insist on it, that we should take the words of Scripture concerning this doctrine in their most natural and obvious meaning; and how do they cry out, of our clouding this doctrine with obscure metaphors, and unintelligible figures of speech! But is this to interpret Scripture according to its most obvious meaning, when the Scripture speaks of our *believing on him that justifies the ungodly*, or the *breakers of his law*, to say, that the meaning of it is performing a course of obedience to his law, and avoiding the breaches of it? Believing on God as a *justifier*, certainly is a different thing from submitting to God as a *lawgiver;* especially a believing on him as a justifier of the ungodly or rebels *against the lawgiver.*

4. It is evident that the subject of justification is looked upon as destitute of any ghteousness in himself, by that expression, *it is counted or imputed to him for righteousness.* The phrase, as the apostle uses it here, and in the context, manifestly imports, that God, of his sovereign grace, is pleased, in his dealings with the sinner, to take and regard that which indeed is not righteousness, and in one that has no righteousness, so, that the consequence shall be the same as if he had righteousness (which may be from the respect that it bears to some thing that is indeed righteous). It is plain that this is the force of the expression in the preceding verses. In the last verse but one, it is manifest that the apostle lays the stress of his argument for the free grace of God, from that text that he cites out of the Old Testament about Abraham, on that word *counted*, or *imputed*, and that this is the thing that he supposed God to show his grace in, viz., in his *counting* something for righteousness, in his consequential dealings with Abraham, that was no righteousness in itself. And in the next verse which immediately precedes the text, "Now to him that worketh, is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt," the word there translated *reckoned*, is the same that in the other verses is rendered *imputed*, and *counted*; and it is as much as if the apostle had said, "As to *him that works* there is no need of any gracious *reckoning* or *counting* it for righteousness, and causing the reward to follow as if it were a righteousness; for if he has works, he has that which is a righteousness in itself, to which the reward properly belongs." This is further evident by the words that follow, verse 6, "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works." What can here be meant by imputing righteousness without works; but imputing righteousness to him that has none of his own? Verses 7, 8, "Saying, blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered: blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." How are these words of David to the apostle's purpose? Or how do they prove any such thing, as that righteousness is imputed without works, unless it be because the word *imputed* is used, and the subject of the imputation is mentioned as a sinner, and consequently destitute of a moral righteousness? For David says no such thing, as that he is forgiven without the works of the ceremonial law; there is no hint of the ceremonial law, or reference to it, in the words. I will therefore venture to infer this *doctrine* from the words, for the subject of my present discourse, viz.

DOCTRINE:

WE ARE JUSTIFIED ONLY BY FAITH IN CHRIST, AND NOT BY ANY MANNER OF VIRTUE OR GOODNESS OF OUR OWN.

Such an assertion as this, I am sensible, many would be ready to cry out of as absurd, betraying a great deal of ignorance, and containing much inconsistence; but I desire every one's patience till I have done.

In handling this doctrine, I would,

1. Explain the *meaning* of it, and show how I would be understood by such an assertion.
2. Proceed to the consideration of the evidence of the *truth* of it.
3. Show how evangelical obedience is concerned in this affair.
4. Answer objections.
5. Consider the importance of the doctrine.

I. I would explain the meaning of the doctrine, or show in what sense I assert it, and would endeavor to evince the truth of it: which may be done in answer to these two inquiries, viz., 1. What is meant by being justified?

What is meant when it is said, that this is by faith alone, without any manner of virtue or goodness "of our own?"

First, I would show what justification is, or what I suppose is meant in Scripture by being justified. And here I would not at all enlarge; and therefore, to answer in short:

A person is said to be justified, when he is approved of God as free from the guilt of sin and its deserved punishment; and as having that righteousness belonging to him that entitles to the reward of life. That we should take the word in such a sense and understand it as the judge's accepting a person as having both a negative and positive righteousness belonging to him, and looking on him therefore as not only quit or free from any obligation to punishment, but also as just and righteous, and so entitled to a positive reward, is not only most agreeable to the etymology and natural import of the word, which signifies to make righteous, or to pass one for righteous in judgment, but also manifestly agreeable to the force of the word as used in Scripture.

Some suppose that nothing more is intended in Scripture by justification, than barely the remission of sins. If it be so it is very strange, if we consider the nature of the case; for it is most evident and none will deny, that it is with respect to the rule or law of God that we are under, that we are said in Scripture to be either justified or condemned. Now what is it to justify a person as the subject of a law or rule, but to judge him or look upon him, and approve him as standing right with respect to that rule? To justify a person in a particular case, is to approve him as standing right, as subject to the law or rule in that case; and to justify in general is to pass him in judgment, as standing right in a state corresponding to the law or rule in general: but certainly in order to a person's being looked on as standing right with respect to the rule in general, or in a state corresponding with the law of God, more is needful than what is negative, or a not having the guilt of sin; for whatever that law is, whether a new one or an old one, yet doubtless something positive is needed in order to its being answered. We are no more justified by the voice of the law, or of him that judges according to it, by a mere pardon of sin, than Adam, our first surety, was justified by the law, at the first point of his existence, before he had done the work, or fulfilled the obedience of the law, or had so much as any trial whether he would fulfil it or no. If Adam had finished his course of perfect obedience, he would have been justified; and certainly his justification would have implied something more than what is merely negative; he would have been approved as having fulfilled the righteousness of the law, and accordingly would have been adjudged to the reward of it. So Christ, our second surety (in whose justification all who believe in him, and whose surety he is, are virtually justified), was not justified till he had done the work the Father had appointed him, and kept the Father's commandments through all trials; and then in his resurrection he was justified. When he that had been put to death in the flesh was quickened by the Spirit, 1 Pet. iii. 18, then he that was manifest in the flesh was justified in the Spirit, 1 Tim. iii. 16. But God, when he justified him in raising him from the dead, did not only release him from his humiliation for sin, and acquit him from any further suffering or abasement for it, but admitted him to that eternal and immortal life, and to the beginning of that exaltation that was the reward of what he had done. And indeed the justification of a believer is no other than his being admitted to communion in, or participation of the justification of this head and surety of all believers; for as Christ suffered the punishment of sin, not as a private person, but as our surety; so when after this suffering he was raised from the dead, he was therein justified, not as a private person

but as the surety and representative of all that should believe in him; so that he was raised again, not only for his own, but also for our justification, according to the apostle, Rom. iv. 25: "Who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." And therefore it is that the apostle says, as he does in Rom. viii. 34, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again."

But that a believer's justification implies, not only remission of sins, or acquittance from the wrath due to it, but also an admittance to a title to that glory that is the reward of righteousness, is more directly taught in the Scripture, as particularly in Rom. v. 1, 2, where the apostle mentions both these as joint benefits implied in justification: "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." So remission of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified, are mentioned together as what are jointly obtained by faith in Christ, Acts xxvi. 18: "That they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified through faith that is in me." Both these are without doubt implied in that passing from death to life, which Christ speaks of as the fruit of faith, and which he opposes to condemnation, John v. 24: "Verily I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death to life." I proceed now,

Secondly, To show what is meant when it is said, that this justification is by faith only, and not by any virtue or goodness of our own.

This inquiry may be subdivided into two, viz., 1. How it is by faith. 2. How it is by faith alone, without any manner of goodness of ours.

1. How justification is by faith. Here the great difficulty has been about the import and force of the particle *by*, or what is that influence that faith has in the affair of justification that is expressed in Scripture by being justified by faith.

Here, if I may humbly express what seems evident to me, though faith be indeed the condition of justification so as nothing else is, yet this matter is not clearly and sufficiently explained by saying that faith is the condition of justification; and that because the word seems ambiguous, both in common use, and also as used in divinity: in one sense, Christ alone performs the condition of our justification and salvation; in another sense, faith is the condition of justification; in another sense other qualifications and acts are conditions of salvation and justification too. There seems to be a great deal of ambiguity in such expressions as are commonly used (which yet we are forced to use), such as, condition of salvation, what is required in order to salvation or justification, the terms of the covenant, and the like; and I believe they are understood in very different senses by different persons. And besides, as the word condition is very often understood in the common use of language, faith is not the only thing in us that is the condition of justification; for by the word condition, as it is very often (and perhaps most commonly) used, we mean any thing that may have the place of a condition in a conditional proposition, and as such is truly connected with the consequent, especially if the proposition holds both in the affirmative and negative, as the condition is either affirmed or denied. If it be that with which, or which being supposed, a thing shall be, and without which, or it being denied, a thing shall not be, we in such a case call it a condition of that thing: but in this sense faith is not the only condition of salvation or justification: for there are many things that accompany and flow from faith, that

are things with which justification shall be, and without which, it will not be, and therefore are found to be put in Scripture in conditional propositions with justification and salvation, in multitudes of places; such are, love to God, and love to our brethren, forgiving men their trespasses, and many other good qualifications and acts. And there are many other things besides faith, which are directly proposed to us, to be pursued and performed by us, in order to eternal life, as those which if they are done, or obtained, we shall have eternal life, and if not done, or not obtained, we shall surely perish. And if it were so, that faith was the only condition of justification in this sense, yet I do not apprehend that to say, that faith was the condition of justification, would express the sense of that phrase of Scripture, of being justified by faith. There is a difference between being justified by a thing, and that thing universally, and necessarily, and inseparably attending or going with justification; for so do a great many things that we are not said to be justified by. It is not the inseparable connection with justification that the Holy Ghost would signify (or that is naturally signified) by such a phrase, but some particular influence that faith has in the affair, or some certain dependence that that effect has on its influence.

Some that have been aware of this have supposed that the influence or dependence might well be expressed by faith's being the instrument of our justification; which has been misunderstood, and injuriously represented, and ridiculed by those that have denied the doctrine of justification by faith alone, as though they had supposed that faith was used as an instrument in the hand of God, whereby he performed and brought to pass that act of his, viz., approving and justifying the believer. Whereas it was not intended that faith was the instrument wherewith God justifies, but the instrument wherewith we receive justification; not the instrument wherewith the justifier acts in justifying, but wherewith the receiver of justification acts in accepting justification. But yet it must be owned, that this is an obscure way of speaking, and there must certainly be some impropriety in calling it an instrument, wherewith we receive or accept justification; for the very persons that thus explain the matter, speak of faith as being the reception or acceptance itself; and if so, how can it be the instrument of reception or acceptance? Certainly there is difference between the act and the instrument. And besides, by their own descriptions of faith, Christ the mediator by whom, and his righteousness by which we are justified, is more directly the object of this acceptance and justification, which is the benefit arising therefrom more indirectly; and therefore, if faith be an instrument, it is more properly the instrument by which we receive Christ, than the instrument by which we receive justification.

But I humbly conceive we have been ready to look too far to find out what that influence of faith in our justification is, or what is that dependence of this effect on faith, signified by the expression of being justified by faith, overlooking that which is most obviously pointed forth in the expression, viz., that, the case being as it is (there being a mediator that has purchased justification), faith in this mediator is that which renders it a meet and suitable thing, in the sight of God, that the believer, rather than others, should have this purchased benefit assigned to him. There is this benefit purchased, which God sees it to be a more meet and suitable thing that it should be assigned to some than others, because he sees them differently qualified; that qualification wherein the meetness to this benefit, as the case stands, consists, is that in us by which we are justified. If Christ had not come into the world and died, &c., to purchase justification, no qualification whatever in us could render it a meet or fit thing that we should be justified: but the case being as it now stands, viz.,

that Christ has actually purchased justification by his own blood for infinitely unworthy creatures, there may be some certain qualification found in some persons, that, either from the relation it bears to the mediator and his merits, or on some other account, is the thing that in the sight of God renders it a meet and condecent thing, that they should have an interest in this purchased benefit, and which if any are destitute of, it renders it an unfit and unsuitable thing that they should have it. The wisdom of God in his constitutions doubtless appears much in the fitness and beauty of them, so that those things are established to be done that are fit to be done, and that those things are connected in his constitution that are agreeable one to another: so God justifies a believer according to his revealed constitution, without doubt, because he sees something in this qualification that, as the case stands, renders it a fit thing that such should be justified; whether it be because faith is the instrument, or as it were the hand, by which he that has purchased justification is apprehended and accepted, or because it is the acceptance itself, or whatever. To be justified, is to be approved of God as a proper subject of pardon, and a right to eternal life; and therefore, when it is said that we are justified by faith, what else can be understood by it, than that faith is that by which we are rendered approvable, fitly so, and indeed, as the case stands, proper subjects of this benefit?

This is something different from faith's being the condition of justification, only so as to be inseparably connected with justification: so are many other things besides faith; and yet nothing in us but faith renders it meet that we should have justification assigned to us; as I shall presently show how, in answer to the next inquiry, viz.

2. How this is said to be by faith alone, without any manner of virtue or goodness of our own. This may seem to some to be attended with two difficulties, viz., how this can be said to be by faith alone, without any virtue or goodness of ours, when faith itself is a virtue, and one part of our goodness, and is not only some manner of goodness of ours, but is a very excellent qualification, and one chief part of the inherent holiness of a Christian? And if it be a part of our inherent goodness or excellency (whether it be this part or any other) that renders it a condecent or congruous thing that we should have this benefit of Christ assigned to us, what less is this than what they mean that talk of a merit of congruity? And moreover, if this part of our Christian holiness qualifies us in the sight of God, for this benefit of Christ, and renders it a fit or meet thing, in his sight, that we should have it, why should not other parts of holiness, and conformity to God, which are also very excellent, and have as much the image of Christ in them, and are no less lovely in God's eyes, qualify us as much, and have as much influence to render us meet in God's sight, for such a benefit as this? Therefore I answer,

When it is said, that we are not justified by any righteousness or goodness of our own, what is meant is, that it is not out of respect to the excellency or goodness of any qualifications or acts in us whatsoever, that God judges it meet that this benefit of Christ should be ours; and it is not in any wise, on account of any excellency or value that there is in faith, that it appears in the sight of God a meet thing, that he that believes should have this benefit of Christ assigned to him, but purely from the relation faith has to the person in whom this benefit is to be had, or as it unites to that mediator, in and by whom we are justified. Here, for the greater clearness, I would particularly explain myself under several propositions.

1. It is certain that there is some union or relation that the people of Christ stand in to him, that is expressed in Scripture, from time to time, by being in

Christ, and is represented frequently by those metaphors of being members of Christ, or being united to him as members to the head, and branches to the stock,* and is compared to a marriage union between husband and wife. I do not now pretend to determine of what sort this union is; nor is it necessary to my present purpose to enter into any manner of dispute about it. If any are disgusted at the word *union*, as obscure and unintelligible, the word *relation* equally serves my purpose; I do not now desire to determine any more about it, than all, of all sorts, will readily allow, viz., that there is a peculiar relation between true Christians and Christ, or a certain relation between him and them, that there is not between him and others; which is signified by those metaphorical expressions in Scripture, of being in Christ, being members of Christ, &c.

2. This relation or union to Christ whereby Christians are said to be in Christ (whatever it be), is the ground of their right to his benefits. This needs no proof; the reason of the thing, at first blush, demonstrates it: but yet it is evident also by Scripture, 1 John v. 12, "He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son, hath not life." 1 Cor. i. 30, "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us—righteousness." First we must be in him, and then he will be made righteousness or justification to us. Eph. i. 6, "Who hath made us accepted in the beloved." Our being in him is the ground of our being accepted. So it is in those unions which the Holy Ghost has thought fit to compare this union to. The union of the members of the body with the head, is the ground of their partaking of the life of the head; it is the union of the branches to the stock, which is the ground of their partaking of the sap and life of the stock; it is the relation of the wife to the husband, that is the ground of her joint interest in his estate; they are looked upon, in several respects, as one in law: so there is a legal union between Christ and true Christians; so that (as all except Socinians allow) one, in some respects, is accepted for the other by the Supreme Judge.

3. And thus it is that faith is that qualification in any person that renders it meet in the sight of God that he should be looked upon as having Christ's satisfaction and righteousness belonging to him, viz., because it is that in him which, on his part, makes up this union between him and Christ. By what has been just now observed, it is a person's being, according to Scripture phrase, in Christ, that is the ground of having his satisfaction and merits belonging to him, and a right to the benefits procured thereby: and the reason of it is plain; it is easy to see how a having Christ's merits and benefits belonging to us, follows from our having (if I may so speak) Christ himself belonging to us, or a being united to him; and if so, it must also be easy to see how, or in what manner, that, in a person, that on his part makes up the union between his soul and Christ, should be the thing on the account of which God looks on it meet that he should have Christ's merits and benefits, from regard to any qualification in him, in this respect, from his doing of it for him, out of respect to the value or loveliness of that qualification, or as a reward of the excellency of it.

* "Our Saviour compares his mystical body, that is his church, to a vine, which his Father, whom he compares to a husbandman, hath planted; *I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.* To represent to us the union that is betwixt Christ and all true Christians, and the influence of grace and spiritual life, which all that are united to him do derive and receive from him, he sets it forth to us by the resemblance of a vine and branches. As there is a natural, vital union between the vine and the branches, so there is a spiritual union between Christ and true Christians; and this union is the cause of our fruitfulness in the works of obedience and a good life. There are some indeed that seem to be grafted into Christ by an outward profession of Christianity, who yet derive no influence from him so as to bring forth fruit, because they are not vitally united to him." *Dr. Tillotson, 3d vol. of Serm.* p. 307.

By this it appears that the vital union between Christ and true Christians, which is much more of a mystery than the relative union, and necessarily implies it, was not thought an unreasonable doctrine by one of the greatest divines on the other side of the question in hand.

As there is nobody but what will allow that there is a peculiar relation between Christ and his true disciples, by which they are in some sense in Scripture said to be one; so I suppose there is nobody but what will allow, that there may be something that the true Christian does on his part, whereby he is active in coming into his relation or union, some of the soul of the Christian, that is the Christian's uniting act, or that which is done towards this union or relation (or whatever any please to call it) on the Christian's part: now faith I suppose to be this act.

I do not now pretend to define justifying faith, or to determine precisely how much is contained in it, but only to determine thus much concerning it, viz., that it is that by which the soul that before was separate and alienated from Christ, unites itself to him, or ceases to be any longer in that state of alienation, and comes into that forementioned union or relation to him, or, to use the Scripture phrase, that it is that by which the soul comes to Christ, and receives him: and this is evident by the Scripture's using these very expressions to signify faith. John vi. 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, "He that *cometh* to me, shall never hunger; and he that *believeth* on me, shall never thirst. But I said unto you, that ye also have seen me, and believe not. All that the Father giveth me, shall *come* to me; and him that *cometh* to me, I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." Ver. 40, "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day." Chap. v. 38, 39, 40, "Whom he hath sent, him ye believe not. Search the Scriptures, for—they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life." Ver. 43, 44, "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. How can ye believe which receive honor one of another?" Chap. i. 12, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." If it be said that these are obscure figures of speech, that, however they might be well understood of old among those that then commonly used such metaphors, yet they are difficultly understood now; I allow that the expressions, *receiving* Christ, and *coming* to Christ, are metaphorical expressions: and if I should allow them to be obscure metaphors, yet so much at least is certainly plain in them, viz., that faith is that by which those that before were separated, and at a distance from Christ, (that is to say, were not so related and united to him as his people are), do cease to be any longer at such a distance, and do come into that relation and nearness; unless they are so unintelligible, that nothing at all can be understood by them.

God does not give those that believe, a union with or an interest in the Saviour, in reward for faith, but only because faith is the soul's active uniting with Christ, or is itself the very act of unition, on their part. God sees it fit, that in order to a union's being established between two intelligent, active beings or persons, so as that they should be looked upon as one, there should be the mutual act of both, that each should receive the other, as actively joining themselves one to another. God, in requiring this in order to a union with Christ as one of his people, treats men as reasonable creatures, capable of act and choice; and hence sees it fit that they only that are one with Christ by their own act, should be looked upon as one in law. What is real in the union between Christ and his people, is the foundation of what is legal; that is, it is something that is really in them, and between them, uniting them, that is the ground of the suitableness of their being accounted as one by the Judge: and if

there be any act or qualification in believers that is of that uniting nature, that it is meet, on that account, that the Judge should look upon them and accept them as one, no wonder that upon the account of the same act or qualification, he should accept the satisfaction and merits of the one for the other, as if it were their satisfaction and merits: it necessarily follows, or rather is implied.

And thus, it is that faith justifies, or gives an interest in Christ's satisfaction and merits and a right to the benefits procured thereby, viz., as it thus makes Christ and the believer one, in the acceptance of the Supreme Judge. It is by faith that we have a title to eternal life, because it is by faith that we have the Son of God, by whom life is. The Apostle John in these words, 1 John v. 12, "He that hath the Son, hath life," seems evidently to have respect to those words of Christ that he gives an account of in his gospel, chap. iii. 36, "He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life." And in the same places that the Scripture speaks of faith as the soul's receiving or coming to Christ, it also speaks of this receiving, or coming to, or joining with Christ, as the ground of an interest in his benefits: to as many as received him, "to them gave he power" to become the sons of God. Ye will not come unto me "that ye might have life." And there is a wide difference between its being looked on suitable that Christ's satisfaction and merits should be theirs that believe, because an interest in that satisfaction and merit is but a fit reward of faith, or a suitable testimony of God's respect to the amiableness and excellency of that grace, and its only being looked on suitable that Christ's satisfaction and merits should be theirs, because Christ and they are so united, that in the eyes of the Judge they may suitably be looked upon and taken as one.

Although, on the account of faith in the believer, it is, in the sight of God, fit and congruous, both that he that believes should be looked upon as in Christ, and also as having an interest in his merits in the way that has been now explained; yet it appears that this is very wide from a merit of congruity, or indeed any moral congruity at all to either. There is a twofold fitness to a state; I know not how to give them distinguishing names, or otherwise, than by calling the one a *moral* and the other a *natural* fitness. A person has a moral fitness for a state, when his moral excellency commends him to it, or when his being put into such a good state is but a fit or suitable testimony of regard or love to the moral excellency, or value, or amiableness of any of his qualifications or acts. A person has a natural fitness for a state, when it appears meet and condecent that he should be in such a state or circumstances, only from the natural concord or agreeableness there is between such qualifications and such circumstances; not because the qualifications are lovely or unlovely, but only because the qualifications and the circumstances are like one another, or do in their nature, suit and agree or unite one to another. And it is on this latter account only that God looks on it fit, by a natural fitness, that he whose heart sincerely unites itself to Christ as his Saviour, should be looked upon as united to that Saviour, and so having an interest in him; and not from any moral fitness there is between the excellency of such a qualification as faith, and such a glorious blessedness as the having an interest in Christ. God's bestowing Christ and his benefits on a soul in consequence of faith, out of regard only to the natural concord there is between such a qualification of a soul, and such a union with Christ, and interest in him, makes the case very widely different from what would be, if he bestowed this from regard to any moral suitableness: for, in the former case, it is only from God's love of order that he bestows these things on the account of faith: in the latter, God doth it out of love to the grace of faith

tself. God will neither look on Christ's merits as ours, nor adjudge his benefits to us, till we be in Christ; nor will he look upon us being in him, without an active union of our hearts and souls to him; because he is a wise being, and delights in order and not in confusion, and that things should be together or asunder according to their nature; and his making such a constitution is a testimony of his love of order: whereas if it were out of regard to any moral fitness or suitableness between faith and such blessedness, it would be a testimony of his love to the act or qualification itself: the one supposes this divine constitution to be a manifestation of God's regard to the beauty of the act of faith; the other only supposes it to be a manifestation of his regard to the beauty of that order that there is in uniting those things that have a natural agreement, and congruity, and unition the one with the other. Indeed a moral suitableness or fitness to a state includes a natural: for it is never so that if there be a moral suitableness that a person should be in such a state, there is not also a natural suitableness; but such a natural suitableness as I have described, by no means necessarily includes a moral.

This is plainly what our divines intend when they say, that faith does not justify as a work, or a righteousness, viz., that it does not justify as a part of our moral goodness or excellency, or that it does not justify as a work in the sense, that man was to have been justified by his works by the covenant of works, which was to have a title to eternal life given him of God in testimony of his pleasedness with his works, or his regard to the inherent excellency and beauty of his obedience. And this is certainly what the Apostle Paul means, when he so much insists upon it, that we are not justified by works, viz., that we are not justified by them as good works, or by any goodness, value, or excellency of our works. For the proof of this I shall at present mention but one thing (being like to have occasion to say what shall make it more abundantly manifest afterwards), and that is, the apostle, from time to time, speaking of our not being justified by works, as the thing that excludes all boasting, Eph. ii. 9, Rom. iii. 27, and chap. iv. 2. Now which way do works give occasion for boasting, but as good? What do men use to boast of, but of something they suppose good or excellent? And on what account do they boast of any thing, but for the supposed excellency that is in it?

From these things we may learn in what manner faith is the only condition of justification, and salvation: for though it be not the only condition, so as alone truly to have the place of a condition in a hypothetical proposition, in which justification and salvation are the consequent, yet it is the condition of justification in a manner peculiar to it, and so that nothing else has a parallel influence with it; because faith includes the whole act of unition to Christ as a Saviour. The entire, active uniting of the soul, or the whole of what is called coming to Christ, and receiving of him, is called faith in Scripture; and however other things may be no less excellent than faith, yet it is not the nature of any other graces or virtues directly to close with Christ as a mediator, any further than they enter into the constitution of justifying faith, and do belong to its nature.

Thus I have explained my meaning in asserting it as a doctrine of the gospel, that we are justified by faith only, without any manner of goodness of our own. I now proceed,

II. To the proof of it; which I shall endeavor to produce in the following arguments.

First. Such is our case, and the state of things, that neither faith, nor any other qualification, or act or course of acts, does or can render it suitable or fit

that a person should have an interest in the Saviour, and so a title to his benefits, on account of any excellency therein, or any other way, than only as something in him may unite him to the Saviour. It is not suitable that God should give fallen man an interest in Christ and his merits, as a testimony of his respect to any thing whatsoever as a loveliness in him; and that because it is not meet, till a sinner is actually justified, that any thing in him should be accepted of God, as an excellency or amiableness of his person; or that God, by any act, should in any manner or degree testify any pleasedness with him, or favor towards him, on the account of any thing inherent in him: and that for two reasons: 1. Because the nature of things will not admit of it. 2. Because an antecedent, divine constitution stands in the way of it.

1. The nature of things will not admit of it. And this appears from the infinite guilt that the sinner, till justified, is under; which arises from the infinite evil or heinousness of sin. But because this is what some deny, I would therefore first establish that point, and show that sin is a thing that is indeed properly of infinite heinousness; and then show the consequence, and show that, it being so, and so the sinner under infinite guilt in God's sight, it cannot be suitable, till the sinner is actually justified, that God should by any act testify any pleasedness with, or acceptance of any thing, as any excellency or amiableness of his person, or indeed have any acceptance of him, or pleasedness with him to testify.

That the evil and demerit of sin is infinitely great, is most demonstrably evident, because what the evil or iniquity of sin consists in, is the violating of an obligation, the doing contrary to what we are obliged to do, or doing what we should not do; and therefore by how much the greater the obligation is that is violated, by so much the greater is the iniquity of the violation. But certainly our obligation to love or honor any being is great in proportion to the greatness or excellency of that being or his worthiness to be loved or honored: we are under greater obligations to love a more lovely being than a less lovely; and if a being be infinitely excellent and lovely, our obligations to love him are therein infinitely great: the matter is so plain, it seems needless to say much about it.

Some have argued strangely against the infinite evil of sin, from its being committed against an infinite object, that if so, then it may as well be argued, that there is also an infinite value or worthiness in holiness and love to God, because that also has an infinite object; whereas the argument, from parity of reason, will carry it in the reverse: the sin of the creature against God is ill deserving in proportion to the distance there is between God and the creature; the greatness of the object, and the meanness of the subject aggravates it. But it is the reverse with regard to the worthiness of respect of the creature to God; it is worthless (and not worthy) in proportion to the meanness of the subject; so much the greater the distance between God and the creature, so much the less is the creature's respect worthy of God's notice or regard. The unworthiness of sin or opposition to God rises and is great, in proportion to the dignity of the object and inferiority of the subject; but on the contrary, the worth or value of respect rises in proportion to the value of the subject; and that for this plain reason, viz., that the evil of disrespect is in proportion to the obligation that lies upon the subject to the object; which obligation is most evidently increased by the excellency and superiority of the object; but on the contrary, the worthiness of respect to a being is in proportion to the obligation that lies on him who is the object (or rather the reason he has) to regard the subject, which certainly is in proportion to the subject's value or excellency. Sin or disrespect is evil or heinous in proportion to the degree of what it denies in the

object, as it were takes from it, viz., its excellency and worthiness of respect; on the contrary, respect is valuable in proportion to the value of what is given to the object in that respect, which undoubtedly (other things being equal) is greater in proportion to the subject's value, or worthiness of regard; because the subject in giving his respect, can give no more than himself to the object; and therefore his gift is of greater or less value in proportion to the value of himself.

Hence (by the way), the love, honor, and obedience of Christ towards God, has infinite value, from the excellency and dignity of the person in whom these qualifications were inherent; and the reason why we needed a person of infinite dignity to obey for us, was because of our infinite comparative meanness, who had disobeyed, whereby our disobedience was infinitely aggravated. We needed one, the worthiness of whose obedience might be answerable to the unworthiness of our disobedience; and therefore needed one who was as great and worthy as we were unworthy.

Another objection (that perhaps may be thought hardly worth mentioning) is, that to suppose sin to be infinitely heinous, is to make all sins equally heinous; for how can any sin be more than infinitely heinous? But all that can be argued hence is, that no sin can be greater with respect to that aggravation, the worthiness of the object against whom it is committed. One sin cannot be more aggravated than another in that respect, because in this respect the aggravation of every sin is infinite; but that does not hinder but that some sins may be more heinous than others in other respects: as if we should suppose a cylinder infinitely long, it cannot be greater in that respect, viz., with respect to the length of it; but yet it may be doubled and trebled, and made a thousand fold more, by the increase of other dimensions. Of sins that are all infinitely heinous, some may be more heinous than others; as well as of divers punishments that are all infinitely dreadful calamities, or all of them infinitely exceeding all finite calamities, so that there is no finite calamity, however great, but what is infinitely less dreadful, or more eligible than any of them, yet some of them may be a thousand times more dreadful than others. A punishment may be infinitely dreadful by reason of the long duration of it; and therefore cannot be greater with respect to that aggravation of it, viz., its length of continuance, but yet may be vastly more terrible on other accounts.

Having thus, as I imagine, made it clear, that all sin is infinitely heinous, and consequently that the sinner, before he is justified, is under infinite guilt in God's sight; it now remains that I show the consequence, or how it follows from hence, that it is not suitable that God should give the the sinner an interest in Christ's merits, and so a title to his benefits, from regard to any qualification, or act, or course of acts in him, on the account of any excellency or goodness whatsoever therein, but only as uniting to Christ; or (which fully implies it) that it is not suitable that God, by any act, should, in any manner or degree, testify any acceptance of, or pleasedness with any thing, as any virtue, or excellency, or any part of loveliness, or valuableness in his person, until he is actually already interested in Christ's merits; which appears by this, that from the premises it follows, that before the sinner is already interested in Christ, and justified, it is impossible God should have any acceptance of, or pleasedness with the person of the sinner, as in any degree lovely in his sight, or indeed less the object of his displeasure and wrath. For, by the supposition, the sinner still remains infinitely guilty in the sight of God; for guilt is not removed but by pardon: but to suppose the sinner already pardoned, is to suppose him already justified; which is contrary to the supposition. But if the sinner still remains in-

finitely guilty in God's sight, that is the same thing as still to be beheld of God as infinitely the object of his displeasure and wrath, or infinitely hateful in his eyes; and if so, where is any room for any thing in him, to be accepted as some valuableness or acceptableness of him in God's sight, or for any act of favor of any kind towards him, or any gift whatsoever to him, in testimony of God's respect to and acceptance of something of him lovely and pleasing? If we should suppose that it could be so, that a sinner could have faith or some other grace in his heart, and yet remain separate from Christ; and it should continue still to be so, that he is not looked upon as being in Christ, or having any relation to him, it would not be meet that that true grace should be accepted of God as any loveliness of his person in the sight of God. If it should be accepted as the loveliness of the person, that would be to accept the person as in some degree lovely to God; but this cannot be consistent with his still remaining under infinite guilt, or infinite unworthiness in God's sight, which that goodness has no worthiness to balance. While God beholds the man as separate from Christ, he must behold him as he is in himself; and so his goodness cannot be beheld by God, but as taken with his guilt and hatefulness; and as put in the scales with it; and being beheld so, his goodness is nothing; because there is a finite on the balance against an infinite, whose proportion to it is nothing. In such a case, if the man be looked on as he is in himself, the excess of the weight in one scale above another, must be looked upon as the quality of the man. These contraries being beheld together, one takes from another, as one number is subtracted from another; and the man must be looked upon in God's sight according to the remainder: for here, by the supposition, all acts of grace and favor, in not imputing the guilt as it is, are excluded, because that supposes a degree of pardon, and that supposes justification, which is contrary to what is supposed, viz., that the sinner is not already justified; and therefore things must be taken strictly as they are: and so the man is still infinitely unworthy and hateful in God's sight, as he was before without diminution, because his goodness bears no proportion to his unworthiness, and therefore when taken together is nothing.

Hence may be more clearly seen the force of that expression in the text, of believing on him that *justifieth the ungodly;* for though there is indeed something in man that is really and spiritually good, that is prior to justification, yet there is nothing that is accepted as any godliness or excellency of the person till after justification. Goodness or loveliness of the person in the acceptance of God, in any degree, is not to be considered prior but posterior in the order and method of God's proceeding in this affair. Though a respect to the natural suitableness between such a qualification, and such a state, does go before justification, yet the acceptance even of faith as any goodness or loveliness of the believer, follows justification: the goodness is on the forementioned account justly looked upon as nothing, until the man is justified: and therefore the man is respected in justification, as in himself altogether hateful. Thus the nature of things will not admit of a man's having an interest given him in the merits or benefits of a Saviour, on the account of any thing as a righteousness, or virtue, or excellency in him.

2. A divine constitution that is antecedent to that which establishes justification by a Saviour (and indeed to any need of a Saviour), stands in the way of it, viz., that original constitution or law which man was put under; by which constitution or law the sinner is condemned, because he is a violator of that law; stands condemned, till he has actually an interest in the Saviour, through whom he is set at liberty from that condemnation. But to suppose that

God gives a man an interest in Christ in reward for his righteousness or virtue is inconsistent with his still remaining under condemnation till he has an interest in Christ; because it supposes, that the sinner's virtue is accepted, and he accepted for it, before he has an interest in Christ; inasmuch as an interest in Christ is given as a reward of his virtue: but the virtue must first be accepted, before it is rewarded, and the man must first be accepted for his virtue, before he is rewarded for it with so great and glorious a reward; for the very notion of a reward, is some good bestowed in testimony of respect to, and acceptance of virtue in the person rewarded. It does not consist with the honor of the majesty of the king of heaven and earth, to accept of any thing from a condemned malefactor, condemned by the justice of his own holy law, till that condemnation be removed: and then such acceptance is inconsistent with, and contradictory to such remaining condemnation; for the law condemns him that violates it to be totally rejected and cast off by God. But how can a man continue under this condemnation, i. e., continue utterly rejected and cast off by God, and yet his righteousness or virtue be accepted, and he himself accepted on the account of it, so as to have so glorious reward as an interest in Christ bestowed as a testimony of that acceptance?

I know that the answer that will be ready for this, is, that we now are not subject to that constitution that mankind were at first put under; but that God, in mercy to mankind, has abolished that rigorous constitution or law that they were under originally, and he has put us under a new law, and introduced a more mild constitution; and that the constitution or law itself not remaining, there is no need of supposing that the condemnation of it remains, to stand in the way of the acceptance of our virtue. And indeed there is no other way of avoiding this difficulty; the condemnation of the law must stand in force against a man till he is actually interested in the Saviour, that has satisfied and answered the law, effectually to prevent any acceptance of his virtue, before, or in order to such an interest, unless the law or constitution itself be abolished. But the scheme of those modern divines by whom this is maintained, seems to contain a great deal of absurdity and self-contradiction: they hold, that the old law given to Adam, which requires perfect obedience, is entirely repealed, and that instead of it we are put under a new law, which requires no more than imperfect, sincere obedience, in compliance with our poor, infirm, impotent circumstances since the fall, whereby we are unable to perform that perfect obedience that was required by the first law: for they strenuously maintain, that it would be unjust in God to require any thing of us that is beyond our present power and ability to perform; and yet they hold, that Christ died to satisfy for the imperfections of our obedience, that so our imperfect obedience might be accepted instead of a perfect. Now, how can these things hang together? I would ask, What law these imperfections of our obedience are a breach of? If they are a breach of no law, then they are not sins, and if they be not sins, what need of Christ's dying to satisfy for them? But if they are sins, and so the breach of some law, what law is it? They cannot be a breach of their new law, for that requires no other than imperfect obedience, or obedience with imperfections; and they cannot be a breach of the old law, for that they say is entirely abolished, and we never were under it; and we cannot break a law that we never were under. They say it would not be just in God to exact of us perfect obedience, because it would not be just in God to require more of us than we can perform in our present state, and to punish us for failing of it; and therefore, by their own scheme, the imperfections of our obedience do not deserve to be punished. What need therefore of Christ's dying to satisfy for them? What need

of Christ's suffering to satisfy for that which is no fault, and in its own nature deserves no suffering? What need of Christ's dying to purchase that our imperfect obedience should be accepted, when, according to their scheme, it would be unjust in itself that any other obedience than imperfect should be required? What need of Christ's dying to make way for God's accepting such an obedience, as it would in itself be unjust in him not to accept? Is there any need of Christ's dying to persuade God not to do unjustly? If it be said, that Christ died to satisfy that law for us, that so we might not be under that law, but might be delivered from it, that so there might be room for us to be under a more mild law; still I would inquire, What need of Christ's dying that we might not be under a law that (according to their scheme) it would in itself be unjust that we should be under, because in our present state we are not able to keep it? What need of Christ's dying that we might not be under a law that it would be unjust that we should be under, whether Christ died or no?

Thus far I have argued principally from reason, and the nature of things:—I proceed now to the

Second argument, which is, That this is a doctrine that the holy Scripture, the revelation that God has given us of his mind and will, by which alone we can ever come to know how those that have offended God can be accepted of him, and justified in his sight, is exceeding full in. particularly the Apostle Paul is abundant in teaching, that "we are justified by faith alone, without the works of the law." There is no one doctrine that he insists so much upon, and is so particular in, and that he handles with so much distinctness, explaining and giving reasons, and answering objections.

Here it is not denied by any, that the apostle does assert, that we are justified by faith, without the works of the law, because the words are express; but only it is said, that we take his words wrong, and understand that by them that never entered into his heart, in that when he excludes the works of the law, we understand him of the whole law of God, or the rule which he has given to mankind to walk by; whereas all that he intends is the ceremonial law.

Some that oppose this doctrine indeed say, that the apostle sometimes means that it is by faith, i. e., a hearty embracing the gospel, in its first act only, or without any preceding holy life, that persons are admitted into a justified state; but, say they, it is by a persevering obedience that they are continued in a justified state; and it is by this that they are finally justified. But this is the same thing as to say, that a man, on his first embracing the gospel, is conditionally justified and pardoned: to pardon sin, is to free the sinner from the punishment of it, or from that eternal misery that is due to it; and therefore, if a person is pardoned or freed from this misery, on his first embracing the gospel, and yet not finally freed, but his actual freedom still depends on some condition yet to be performed, it is inconceivable how he can be pardoned otherwise than conditionally; that is, he is not actually pardoned, and freed from punishment, but only he has God's promise that he shall be pardoned on future conditions; God promises him, that now, if he perseveres in obedience, he shall be finally pardoned, or actually freed from hell; which is to make just nothing at all of the apostle's great doctrine of justification by faith alone: such a conditional pardon is no pardon or justification at all, any more than all mankind have, whether they embrace the gospel or no; for they all have a promise of final justification on condition of future, sincere obedience, as much as he that embraces the gospel. But not to dispute about this, we will suppose that there may be something or other at the sinner's first embracing the gospel, that may properly be called justification or pardon, and yet that final justification, or real freedom

from the punishment of sin, is still suspended on conditions hitherto unfulfilled, yet they that hold that sinners are thus justified on embracing the gospel, suppose that they are justified by this no otherwise than as this is a leading act of obedience, or at least as virtue and moral goodness in them, and therefore would be excluded by the apostle as much as any other virtue or obedience, if it be allowed that he means the moral law, when he excludes the works of the law. And therefore, if that point be yielded, that the apostle means the moral, and not the ceremonial law only, their whole scheme falls to the ground.

And because the issue of the whole argument from those texts in St. Paul's epistles depends on the determination of this point, I would be particular in the discussion of it.

Some of our opponents in this doctrine of justification, when they deny, that by the law the apostle means the moral law, or the whole rule of life which God has given to mankind, seem to choose to express themselves thus, that the apostle only intends the Mosaic dispensation. But this comes to just the same thing as if they said, that the apostle only means to exclude the works of the ceremonial law; for when they say, that it is intended only that we be not justified by the works of the Mosaic dispensation, if they mean any thing by it, it must be, that we be not justified by attending and observing what is Mosaic in that dispensation, or by what was peculiar to it, and wherein it differed from the Christian dispensation; which is the same as that which is ceremonial and positive, and not moral, in that administration. So that this is what I have to disprove, viz., that the apostle when he speaks of the works of the law in this affair, means only the works of the ceremonial law, or those observances that were peculiar to the Mosaic administration.

And here it must be noted, that nobody controverts it with them, whether the works of the ceremonial law be not included, or whether the apostle does not particularly argue against justification by circumcision, and other ceremonial observances; but all that is in question is, whether, when he denies justification by works of the law, he is to be understood of the ceremonial law only, or whether the moral law be not also implied and intended; and therefore those arguments that are brought to prove that the apostle meant the ceremonial law, are nothing to the purpose unless they prove more than that, viz., that the apostle meant those only.

What is much insisted on is, that it was the judaizing Christians' being so fond of circumcision, and other ceremonies of the law, and depending so much on them, which was the occasion of the apostle's writing as he does against justification by the works of the law. But supposing it were so, that their trusting in works of the ceremonial law were the sole occasion of the apostle's writing (which yet there is no reason to allow, as may appear afterwards), if their trusting in a particular work, as a work of righteousness, was all that gave occasion to the apostle to write, how does it follow, that therefore the apostle did not upon that occasion write against trusting in all works of righteousness whatsoever? Where is the absurdity of supposing that the apostle might take occasion, from his observing some to trust in a certain work as a work of righteousness, to write to them against persons' trusting in any works of righteousness, and that it was a very proper occasion too? Yea, it would have been unavoidable for the apostle to have argued against trusting in a particular work in that quality of a work of righteousness, which quality was general, but he must therein argue against works of righteousness in general. Supposing it had been some other particular sort of works that was the occasion of the apostle's writing, as for instance, works of charity, and the apostle should

hence take occasion to write to them not to trust in their works, could the apostle by that be understood of no other work besides works of charity? Would it have been absurd to understand him as writing against trusting in any work at all, because it was their trusting to a particular work that gave occasion to his writing?

Another thing that is alleged as an evidence that the apostle means the ceremonial law, when he says, we cannot be justified by the works of the law, is, that he uses that argument to prove it, viz., that this law that he speaks of was given so long after the covenant with Abraham, in Gal. iii. 17: "And this, I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul." But, say they, it was only the Mosaic administration, and not the covenant of works, that was given so long after. But the apostle's argument seems manifestly to be mistaken by them. The apostle does not speak of a law that began first to have being four hundred and thirty years after; if he did, there would be some force in their objection; but he has respect to a certain solemn transaction, well known among the Jews, by the phrase of the giving of the law, which was that great transaction at Mount Sinai, that we have account of in the 19th and 20th chapters of Exodus, consisting especially in God's giving the ten commandments, which is the moral law, with terrible voice, which law he afterwards gave in tables of stone. This transaction, the Jews, in the apostle's time misinterpreted; they looked upon it as God's establishing the law as a rule of justification. This conceit of theirs the apostle brings this invincible argument against, viz., that God would never go about to disannul his covenant with Abraham, which was plainly a covenant of grace, by a transaction with his posterity, that was so long after it, and was plainly built upon it: he would not overthrow a covenant of grace that he had long before established with Abraham, for him and his seed (which is often mentioned on the ground of God's making them his people), by now establishing a covenant of works with them at Mount Sinai, as the Jews and judaizing Christians supposed.

But that the apostle does not mean works of the ceremonial law only, when he excludes works of the law in justification, but also of the moral law, and all works of obedience, virtue and righteousness whatsoever, may appear by the following things.

1. The apostle does not only say, that we are not justified by the works of the law, but that we are not justified by works, using a general term; as in our text, it is said, *to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth*, &c.; and in the 6th verse, "God imputeth righteousness without works;" and chap. xi. 6, "And if by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace: but if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work." So Eph. ii. 8, 9, "For by grace are ye saved, through faith; not of works;" by which there is no reason in the world to understand the apostle of any other than works in general, as correlates of a reward, or good works, or works of virtue and righteousness. When the apostle says, we are justified or saved not by works, without any such term annexed, as the law, or any other addition, to limit the expression, what warrant has any one to confine it to works of a particular law or institution, excluding others? Are not observances of other divine laws, works, as well as of that? It seems to be allowed by the divines in the Arminian scheme, in their interpretation of several of those texts where the apostle mentions works only, without any additions, that he means our own good works in general; but then, they say, he only means to exclude any proper merit in those works. But to say the apostle

means one thing when he says, we be not justified by works, another when he says, we be not justified by the works of the law, when we find the expressions mixed and used in the same discourse, and when the apostle is evidently on the same argument, is very unreasonable; it is to dodge and fly from Scripture, rather than to open and yield ourselves to its teachings.

2. In the third chapter of Romans, our having been guilty of breaches of the moral law, is an argument that the apostle uses, why we cannot be justified by the works of the law; beginning with the 9th verse, there he proves, out of the Old Testament, that all are under sin: "There is none righteous, no not one: their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit: their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; and their feet swift to shed blood." And so he goes on, mentioning only those things that are breaches of the moral law; and then when he has done, his conclusion is, in the 19th and 20th verses, "Now, we know that whatsoever things the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore, by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight." This is most evidently his argument, because all had sinned (as it was said in the 9th verse), and been guilty of those breaches of the moral law that he had mentioned (and it is repeated over again afterward, verse 23): "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" therefore none at all can be justified by the law. Now if the apostle meant only, that we are not justified by the deeds of the ceremonial law, what kind of arguing would that be: "Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness, their feet are swift to shed blood;" therefore they cannot be justified by the deeds of the Mosaic administration: they are guilty of the breaches of the moral law; and therefore they cannot be justified by the deeds of the ceremonial law? Doubtless the apostle's argument is, that the very same law that they have broken and sinned against, can never justify them as observers of it, because every law does not justify, but necessarily condemns its violators. And therefore our breaches of the moral law argue no more, than that we cannot be justified by that law that we have broken.

And it may be noted, that the apostle's argument here is the same that I have already used, viz., that as we are in ourselves, and out of Christ, we are under the condemnation of that original law or constitution that God established with mankind; and therefore it is no way fit that any thing that we do any virtue or obedience of ours should be accepted, or we accepted on the account of it.

3. The apostle, in the preceding part of this epistle, wherever he has the phrase, *the law*, evidently intends the moral law principally. As in the 12th verse of the foregoing chapter: "For as many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law." It is evidently the written, moral law the apostle means, by the next verse but one: "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law;" that is, the moral law that the Gentiles have by nature. And so the next verse, "Which show the work of the law written in their hearts." It is the moral law, and not the ceremonial, that is written in the hearts of those that are destitute of divine revelation. And so in the 18th verse, "Thou approvest the things that are more excellent; being instructed out of the law." It is the moral law that shows us the nature of things, and teaches us what is excellent; 20th verse, "Thou hast a form of knowledge and truth in the law." It is the moral law, as is evident by what follows, verses 22, 23: "Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? Thou that abhorrest idols,

dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonorest thou God? Adultery, idolatry, and sacrilege, surely are the breaking of the moral, and not the ceremonial law. So in the 27th verse: "And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law?" i. e., the Gentiles, that you despise because uncircumcised, if they live moral and holy lives, in obedience to the moral law, shall condemn you though circumcised. And so there is not one place in all the preceding part of the epistle, where the apostle speaks of the law, but that he most apparently intends principally the moral law; and yet when the apostle, in continuance of the same discourse, comes to tell us that we cannot be justified by the works of the law, then they will needs have it, that he means only the ceremonial law; yea, though all this discourse about the moral law, showing how the Jews, as well as Gentiles have violated it, is evidently preparatory and introductory to that doctrine, chap. iii. 20, "that no flesh," that is none of mankind, neither Jews nor Gentiles, "can be justified by the works of the law."

4. It is evident that when the apostle says, we cannot be justified by the works of the law, he means the moral as well as ceremonial law, by his giving this reason for it, that "by the law is the knowledge of sin," as Rom. iii. 20: "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin." Now that law by which we come to the knowledge of sin, is the moral law chiefly and primarily. If this argument of the apostle be good, "that we cannot be justified by the deeds of the law, because it is by the law that we come to the knowledge of sin;" then it proves that we cannot be justified by the deeds of the moral law, nor by the precepts of Christianity; for by them is the knowledge of sin. If the reason be good, then where the reason holds, the truth holds. It is a miserable shift, and a violent force put upon the words, to say that the meaning is, that by the law of circumcision is the knowledge of sin, because circumcision, signifying the taking away of sin, puts men in mind of sin. The plain meaning of the apostle is, that as the law most strictly forbids sin, it tends to convince us of sin, and bring our own consciences to condemn us, instead of justifying us; that the use of it is to declare to us our own guilt and unworthiness, which is the reverse of justifying and approving us as virtuous or worthy. This is the apostle's meaning, if we will allow him to be his own expositor; for he himself, in this very epistle, explains to us how it is that by the law we have the knowledge of sin, and that it is by the law's forbidding sin, chap. vii. 7: "I had not known sin but by the law; for I had not known lust, except the law had said, thou shalt not covet." There the apostle determines two things; first, that the way in which "by the law is the knowledge of sin," is by the law's forbidding sin: and secondly, which is more directly still to the purpose, he determines that it is the moral law by which we come to the knowledge of sin; "for," says he, "I had not known lust, except the law had said, thou shalt not covet." Now it is the moral, and not the ceremonial law, that says, thou shalt not covet: therefore, when the apostle argues, that by the deeds of the law no flesh living shall be justified, because by the law is the knowledge of sin, his argument proves (unless he was mistaken as to the force of his argument), that we cannot be justified by the deeds of the moral law.

5. It is evident that the apostle does not mean the ceremonial law only, because he gives this reason why we have righteousness, and a title to the privilege of God's children, not by the law, but by faith, "that the law worketh wrath." Rom. iv. 13—16, "For the promise that he should be the heir of the

world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect. Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression. Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace." Now the way in which the law works wrath, by the apostle's own account, in the reason he himself annexes, is by forbidding sin, and aggravating the guilt of the transgression; "for," says he, "where no law is, there is no transgression:" and so, chap. vii. 13, "That sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful." If, therefore, this reason of the apostle be good, it is much stronger against justification by the moral law than the ceremonial law; for it is by transgressions of the moral law chiefly that there comes wrath; for they are most strictly forbidden, and most terribly threatened.

6. It is evident that when the apostle says, we be not justified by the works of the law, he excludes all our own virtue, goodness, or excellency, by that reason that he gives for it, viz., "that boasting might be excluded." Rom. iii. 26, 27, 28, "To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay; but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law." Eph. ii. 8, 9, "For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." Now what are men wont to boast of, but what they esteem their own goodness or excellency? If we are not justified by the works of the ceremonial law, yet how does that exclude boasting, as long as we are justified by our own excellency, or virtue and goodness of our own, or works of righteousness which we have done?

But it is said, that boasting is excluded, as circumcision was excluded, which was what the Jews especially used to glory in, and value themselves upon, above other nations.

To this I answer, that the Jews were not only used to boast of circumcision, but were notorious for boasting of their moral righteousness. The Jews of those days were generally admirers and followers of the Pharisees, who were full of their boasts of their moral righteousness; as we may see by the example of the Pharisee mentioned in the 18th of Luke, which Christ mentions as describing the general temper of that sect: "Lord," says he, "I thank thee, that I am not as other men, an extortioner, nor unjust, nor an adulterer." The works that he boasts of were chiefly moral works: he depended on the works of the law for justification; and therefore Christ tells us, that the publican, that renounced all his own righteousness, "went down to his house justified rather than he." And elsewhere we read of the Pharisees' praying in the corners of the streets, and sounding a trumpet before them when they did alms. But those works which they so vainly boasted of were moral works: and not only so, but what the apostle, in this very epistle, is condemning the Jews for, is their boasting of the moral law. Chap. ii. 22, 23, "Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, doest thou commit adultery? Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonorest thou God?" The law here mentioned that they made their boast of, was that of which adultery, idolatry and sacrilege, were the breaches, which is the moral law. So that this is the boasting which the apostle condemns them for, and therefore, if they were justified by the works of this law, then how comes he to say that their boasting is excluded? And besides, when they boasted of the rites of the ceremonial law, it was

under a notion of its being a part of their own goodness or excellency, or what made them holier and more lovely in the sight of God than other people, and if they were not justified by this part of their own supposed goodness or holiness, yet if they were by another, how did that exclude boasting? How was their boasting excluded, unless all goodness or excellency of their own was excluded?

The reason given by the apostle why we can be justified by faith only, and not by the works of the law, in the 3d chapter of Gal., viz., "that they that are under the law, are under the curse," makes it evident he does not mean the ceremonial law only. In that chapter the apostle had particularly insisted upon it, that Abraham was justified by faith, and that it is by faith only, and not by the works of the law, that we can be justified, and become the children of Abraham, and be made partakers of the blessing of Abraham: and he gives this reason for it, in the 10th verse: "For as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." It is manifest that these words, cited from Deuteronomy, are spoken, not only with regard to the ceremonial law, but the whole law of God to mankind, and chiefly the moral law; and that all mankind are therefore, as they are in themselves, under that curse, not only while the ceremonial law lasted, but now since that has ceased: and therefore all that are justified are redeemed from that curse, by Christ's bearing it for them; as there, in verse 13: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Now therefore, either its being said so, that he is cursed that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them, is a good reason why we cannot be justified by the works of that law of which it is so said; or it is not: if it be, then it is a good reason why we cannot be justified by the works of the moral law, and of the whole rule which God has given to mankind to walk by; for the words are spoken of the moral as well as the ceremonial law, and reach every command or precept which God has given to mankind; and chiefly the moral precepts, which are most strictly enjoined, and the violations of which in both New Testament and Old, and in the books of Moses themselves, are threatened with the most dreadful curse.

8. The apostle does in like manner argue against our being justified by our own righteousness, as he does against being justified by the works of the law; and evidently uses the expressions, *our own righteousness*, and *works of the law*, promiscuously, and as signifying the same thing. It is particularly evident by Rom. x. 3: "For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." Here it is plain that the same thing is asserted as in the last two verses but one of the foregoing chapter: "But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law." And it is very unreasonable, upon several accounts, to suppose that the apostle, by their own righteousness, intends only their ceremonial righteousness. For when the apostle warns us against trusting in our own righteousness for justification, doubtless it is fair to interpret the expression in an agreement with the other Scriptures, where we are warned, not to think that it is for the sake of our own righteousness that we obtain God's favor and blessing: as particularly that in Deut. ix. 4, 5, 6, "Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the Lord thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying

For my righteousness the Lord hath brought me in to possess this land: but for the wickedness of these nations the Lord doth drive them out from before thee. Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations, the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which he sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Understand therefore, that the Lord thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it, for thy righteousness: for thou art a stiff-necked people." None will pretend that here the expression *thy righteousness*, signifies a ceremonial righteousness only, but all virtue or goodness of their own; yea, and the inward goodness of the heart, as well as the outward goodness of life, which appears by the beginning of the 5th verse, "Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thy heart;" and also by the antithesis in the 6th verse, "Not for thy righteousness, for thou art a stiff-necked people." Their stiff-neckedness was their moral wickedness, obstinacy, and perverseness of heart: by righteousness, therefore, on the contrary, is meant their moral virtue, and rectitude of heart and life. This is what I would argue from hence, that the expression of *our own righteousness*, when used in Scripture with relation to the favor of God, and when we are warned against looking upon it as that by which that favor or the fruits of it, are obtained, does not signify a ceremonial righteousness only, but all manner of goodness of our own.

The Jews also, in the New Testament, are condemned for trusting in their own righteousness in this sense Luke xviii. 9, &c.: "And he spake this parable unto certain that trusted in themselves that they were righteous." This intends chiefly a moral righteousness; as appears by the parable itself, in which we have an account of the prayer of the Pharisee, wherein the things that he mentions as what he trusts in, are chiefly moral qualifications and performances, viz., that he was not an extortioner, unjust, nor an adulterer, &c.

But we need not go to the writings of other penmen of the Scripture. If we will allow the Apostle Paul to be his own interpreter, he, when he speaks of our own righteousness as that which we are not justified or saved by, does not mean a ceremonial righteousness only, nor does he only intend a way of religion, and serving God, of our own choosing and fixing on, without divine warrant or prescription; but by our own righteousness he means the same as a righteousness of our own doing, whether it be a service or righteousness of God's prescribing, or our own unwarranted performing: let it be an obedience to the ceremonial law, or a gospel obedience, or what it will, if it be a righteousness of our own doing, it is excluded by the apostle in this affair, as is evident by Titus iii. 5: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done."

But I would more particularly insist on this text; and therefore this may be the 9th argument, That the apostle, when he denies justification by works, and by works of the law, and by our own righteousness, does not mean works of the ceremonial law only, viz., what is said by the Apostle in Tit. iii. 3—7: "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour: that, being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Works of righteousness that we have done are here excluded, as what we are neither saved nor justified by The apostle express

ly says, we are not saved by them; and it is evident that when he says this, he has respect to the affair of justification, and that he means, we are not saved by them in not being justified by them, by the next verse but one, which is part of the same sentence: "That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

It is several ways manifest, that the apostle in this text, by "works of righteousness which we have done," does not mean works of the ceremonial law only. It appears by the third verse, "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another." These are breaches of the moral law, that the apostle observes they lived in before they were justified: and it is most plain that it is this that gives occasion to the apostle to observe, as he does in the 5th verse, that it was not by works of righteousness which they had done, that they were saved or justified.

But we need not go to the context; it is most apparent from the words themselves, that the apostle does not mean works of the ceremonial law only. If he had only said, it is not by our own works of righteousness, what could we understand by works of righteousness, but only righteous works, or, which is the same thing, good works? And to say, that it is by our own righteous works that we are justified, though not by one particular kind of righteous works, would certainly be a contradiction to such an assertion. But the words are rendered yet more strong, plain and determined in their sense, by those additional words, *which we have done;* which shows that the apostle intends to exclude all our own righteous or virtuous works universally. If it should be asserted concerning any commodity, treasure, or precious jewel, that it could not be procured by money, and not only so, but, to make the assertion the more strong, it should be asserted with additional words, that it could not be procured by money that men possess; how unreasonable would it be after all, to say, that all that was meant was, that it could not be procured with brass money?

And what renders the interpreting this text of works of the ceremonial law yet more unreasonable, is, that these works were indeed no works of righteousness, but were only falsely supposed to be so by the Jews; and that, our opponents in this doctrine suppose, is the very reason why we be not justified by them, because they are not works of righteousness, or because (the ceremonial law being now abrogated) there is no obedience in them. But how absurd is it to say, that the apostle, when he says we are not justified by works of righteousness that we have done, meant only works of the ceremonial law, and that for that very reason, because they are not works of righteousness! To illustrate this by the forementioned comparison: if it should be asserted, that such a thing could not be procured by money that men possess, how ridiculous would it be to say, that the meaning only was, that it could not be procured by counterfeit money, and that for that reason, because it was not money! What Scripture will stand before men, if they will take liberty to mangle it thus? Or what one text is there in the Bible that may not at this rate be explained away, and perverted to any sense men please?

But then further, if we should allow that the apostle intends only to oppose justification by works of the ceremonial law in this text, yet it is evident by the expression he uses, that he means to oppose it under that notion, or in that quality, of their being works of righteousness of our own doing. But if the apostle argues against our being justified by works of the ceremonial law, under the notion of their being of that nature and kind, viz., works of our own doing;

then it will follow that the apostle's argument is strong against, not only those, but all of that nature and kind, even all that are of our doing.

If there were no other text in the Bible about justification but this, this would clearly and invincibly prove that we are not justified by any of our own goodness, virtue, or righteousness, or for the excellency or righteousness of any thing that we have done in religion; because it is here so fully and strongly asserted: but this text does abundantly confirm other texts of the apostle where he denies justification by works of the law. There is no doubt can be rationally made, but that when the apostle here shows, that God "saves us according to his mercy," in that he doth not save us by "works of righteousness that we have done," verse 5, and that so we are "justified by grace," verse 7, herein opposing salvation by grace, he means the same works as he does in other places, where he in like manner opposes works and grace: the same works as in Rom. xi. 6, "And if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work." And the same works as in Rom. iv. 4, "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt." And the same works that are spoken of in the context of the 24th verse of the foregoing chapter, which the apostle there calls "works of the law, being justified freely by his grace." And of the 4th chapter, 16th verse, "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace." Where in the context, the righteousness of faith is opposed to the righteousness of the law: for here God's saving us according to his mercy, and justifying us by grace, is opposed to saving us by works of righteousness that we have done; in the same manner as in those places, justifying us by works of the law.

The apostle could not mean works of the ceremonial law only, when he says, we are not justified by the works of the law, because it is asserted of the saints under the Old Testament as well as New. If men are justified by their sincere obedience, it will then follow that formerly, before the ceremonial law was abrogated, men were justified by the works of the ceremonial law as well as the moral. For if we are justified by our own sincere obedience, then it alters not the case, whether the commands be moral or positive, provided they be God's commands, and our obedience be obedience to God: and so the case must be just the same under the Old Testament, with the works of the moral law and ceremonial, according to the measure of the virtue of obedience there was in either. It is true, their obedience to the ceremonial law would have nothing to do in the affair of justification, unless it was sincere; and so neither would the works of the moral law; obedience to the moral law would have been concerned in the affair of justification, if sincere; and so would obedience to the ceremonial. If obedience was the thing, then obedience to the ceremonial law, while that stood in force, and obedience to the moral law, had just the same sort of concern, according to the proportion of obedience that consists in each; as now under the New Testament, if obedience is what we are justified by, that obedience must doubtless comprehend obedience to all God's commands now in force, to the positive precepts of attendance on baptism and the Lord's supper, as well as moral precepts. If obedience be the thing, it is not because it is obedience to such a kind of commands, but because it is obedience. So that by this supposition the saints under the Old Testament were justified, at least in part, by their obedience to the ceremonial law.

But it is evident that the saints under the Old Testament were not justified in any measure by the works of the ceremonial law. This may be proved, proceeding on the foot of our adversaries' own interpretation of the apostles phrase

of the works of the law, and supposing him to mean by it only the works of the ceremonial law. To instance in David, it is evident that he was not justified in any wise by the works of the ceremonial law, by Rom. iv. 6, 7, 8: "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." It is plain that the apostle is here speaking of justification, by the preceding verse and by all the context; and the thing spoken of, viz., forgiving iniquities and covering sins, is what our adversaries themselves suppose to be justification, and even the whole of justification. This David, speaking of himself, says (by the apostle's interpretation) that he had without works. For it is manifest that David, in the words here cited, from the beginning of the 32d Psalm, has a special respect to himself: he speaks of his own sins being forgiven and not imputed to him; as appears by the words that immediately follow: "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old; through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid: I said I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." Let us therefore understand the apostle which way we will, by works, when he says, David "describes the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord imputes righteousness without works," whether of all manner of works, or only works of the ceremonial law, yet it is evident at least, that David was not justified by works of the ceremonial law. Therefore here is the argument: if our own obedience be that by which men are justified, then under the Old Testament men were justified partly by obedience to the ceremonial law (as has been proved); but the saints under the Old Testament were not justified partly by the works of the ceremonial law; therefore men's own obedience is not that by which they are justified.

11. Another argument that the apostle when he speaks of the two opposite ways of justification, one by the works of the law, and the other by faith, does not mean the works of the ceremonial law only, may be taken from that place, Romans x. 5, 6, "For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man which doeth those things, shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith, speaketh on this wise," &c. Here two things are evident.

First, That the apostle here speaks of the same two opposite ways of justification, one by the righteousness which is of the law, the other by faith that he had treated of in the former part of the epistle; and therefore it must be the same law that is here spoken of. The same law is here meant as in the last verses of the foregoing chapter, where he says the Jews had "not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law;" as is plain, because the apostle is still speaking of the same thing; the words are a continuation of the same discourse, as may be seen at first glance, by any one that looks on the context.

Secondly, It is manifest that Moses, when he describes the righteousness which is of the law, or the way of justification by the law, in the words here cited, "He that doeth these things shall live in them," does not speak only, nor chiefly, of the works of the ceremonial law; for none will pretend that God ever made such a covenant with man, that he that kept the ceremonial law should live in it, or that there ever was a time, that it was chiefly by the works of the ceremonial law that men lived and were justified. Yea, it is manifest by the forementioned instance of David, mentioned in the 4th of Romans, that there never was a time wherein men were justified in any measure by the

works of the ceremonial law, as has been just now shown. Moses therefore, in those words which, the apostle says, are a description of the righteousness which is of the law, cannot mean the ceremonial law only. And therefore it follows, that when the apostle speaks of justification by the works of the law, as opposite to justification by faith, he does not mean the ceremonial law only, but also the works of the moral law, which are the things spoken of by Moses, when he says, "he that doeth these things shall live in them;" and which are the things that the apostle in this very place is arguing that we cannot be justified by; as is evident by the context, the last verses of the preceding chapter: "But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law," &c. And in the 3d verse of this chapter: "For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."

And further, how can the apostle's description that he here gives from Moses of this exploded way of justification by the works of the law, consist with the Arminian scheme, of a way of justification by the virtue of a sincere obedience, that still remains as the true and only way of justification under the gospel. It is most apparent that it is the design of the apostle to give a description of both the legal rejected, and the evangelical valid ways of justification, in that wherein they differ, or are distinguished the one from the other: but how is that, "he that doeth those things shall live in them;" that wherein the way of justification by the works of the law differs, or is distinguished from that in which Christians under the gospel are justified, according to their scheme; for still, according to them, it may be said, in the same manner, of the precepts of the gospel, he that doeth these things, shall live in them: the difference lies only in the things to be done, but not at all in that, that the doing of them is not the condition of living in them, just in the one case, as in the other. The words, "he that doeth them shall live in them," will serve just as well for a description of the latter as the former. By the apostle's saying, the righteousness of the law is described thus, he that doeth these things shall live in them; but the righteousness of faith saith thus, plainly intimates that the righteousness of faith saith otherwise, and in an opposite manner. But besides, if these words cited from Moses, are actually said by him of the moral law as well as ceremonial, as it is most evident they are, it renders it still more absurd to suppose them mentioned by the apostle, as the very note of distinction between justification by a ceremonial obedience, and a moral and sincere obedience, as the Arminians must suppose.

Thus I have spoken to a second argument, to prove that we are not justified by any manner of virtue or goodness of our own, viz., that to suppose otherwise, is contrary to the doctrine that is directly urged, and abundantly insisted on, by the Apostle Paul in his epistles.

I now proceed to a

Third argument, viz., That to suppose that we are justified by our own sincere obedience, or any of our own virtue or goodness, derogates from gospel grace.

That scheme of justification that manifestly takes from, or diminishes the grace of God, is undoubtedly to be rejected; for it is the declared design of God in the gospel, to exalt the freedom and riches of his grace, in that method of justification of sinners, and way of admitting them to his favor, and the blessed fruits of it, which it declares. The Scripture teaches, that the way of

justification that is appointed in the gospel covenant, is appointed as it is, for that end, that free grace might be expressed and glorified: Rom. iv. 16, "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace." The exercising and magnifying the free grace of God in the gospel contrivance for the justification and salvation of sinners, is evidently the chief design of it; and this freedom and riches of the grace of the gospel is everywhere spoken of in Scripture as the chief glory of it. Therefore that doctrine that derogates from the free grace of God in justifying sinners, as it is most opposite to God's design, so it must be exceedingly offensive to him.

Those that maintain, that we are justified by our own sincere obedience, do pretend that their scheme does not diminish the grace of the gospel; for they say, that the grace of God is wonderfully manifested in appointing such a way and method of salvation, by sincere obedience in assisting us to perform such an obedience, and in accepting our imperfect obedience instead of perfect.

Let us therefore examine that matter, whether their scheme, of a man's being justified by his own virtue and sincere obedience, does derogate from the grace of God or no; or whether free grace is not more exalted, in supposing, as we do, that we are justified without any manner of goodness of our own. In order to this, I will lay down this self-evident

Proposition, That "whatsoever that be by which the abundant benevolence of the giver is expressed, and gratitude in the receiver is obliged, that magnifies free grace." This I suppose none will ever controvert or dispute.

And it is not much less evident, that it doth both show a more abundant benevolence in the giver when he shows kindness without goodness or excellency in the object, to move him to it; and that it enhances the obligation to gratitude in the receiver.

1. It shows a more abundant goodness in the giver, when he shows kindness without any excellency in our persons or actions that would move the giver to love and beneficence. For it certainly shows the more abundant and overflowing goodness, or disposition to communicate good, by how much the less loveliness or excellency there is to entice beneficence: the less there is in the receiver to draw good will and kindness, it argues the more of the principle of good will and kindness in the giver; for one that has but little of a principle of love and benevolence, may be drawn to do good and to show kindness, when there is a great deal to draw him, or when there is much excellency and loveliness in the object to move good will; when he whose goodness and benevolence is more abundant, will show kindness where there is less to draw it forth; for he does not so much need to have it drawn from without, he has enough of the principle, within, to move him of itself. Where there is most of the principle, there it is most sufficient for itself, and stands in least need of something without to excite it: for certainly a more abundant goodness more easily flows forth with less to impel or draw it, than where there is less; or, which is the same thing, the more any one is disposed of himself, the less he needs from without himself, to put him upon it, or stir him up to it. And therefore his kindness appears the more exceeding great when it is bestowed without any excellency or loveliness in the receiver, or when the receiver is respected in the gift, as wholly without excellency: and much more still when the benevolence of the giver not only finds nothing in the receiver to draw it, but a great deal of hatefulness to repel it: the abundance of goodness is then manifested, not only in flowing forth without any thing extrinsic to put it forward, but in overcoming great repulsion in the object. And then does kindness and love appear most triumphant, and wonderfully great, when the receiver is re-

pected in the gift, as not only wholly without all excellence or beauty to attract it, but altogether, yea, infinitely vile and hateful.

2. It is apparent also that it enhances the obligation to gratitude in the receiver. This is agreeable to the common sense of mankind, that the less worthy or excellent the object of benevolence, or the receiver of kindness, is, the more he is obliged, and the greater gratitude is due. He therefore is most of all obliged, that receives kindness without any goodness or excellency in himself, but with a total and universal hatefulness. And as it is agreeable to the common sense of mankind, so it is agreeable to the word of God. How often does God in the Scripture insist on this argument with men, to move them to love him, and to acknowledge his kindness! How much does he insist on this as an obligation to gratitude, that they are so sinful and undeserving, and ill deserving!

Therefore it certainly follows, that that doctrine that teaches, that God, when he justifies a man, and shows him that great kindness, as to give him a right to eternal life, does not do it for any obedience, or any manner of goodness of his; but that justification respects a man as ungodly, and wholly without any manner of virtue, beauty or excellency. I say, this doctrine does certainly more exalt the free grace of God in justification, and man's obligation to gratitude to him for such a favor, than the contrary doctrine, viz., that God, in showing this kindness to man, respects him as sincerely obedient and virtuous, and as having something in him that is truly excellent, and lovely, and acceptable in his sight, and that this goodness or excellency of man is the very fundamental condition of the bestowment of that kindness on him, or of the distinguishing him from others by that benefit. But I hasten to a

Fourth argument for the truth of the doctrine, "That to suppose that a man is justified by his own virtue or obedience, derogates from the honor of the Mediator, and ascribes that to man's virtue that belongs only to the righteousness of Christ."

It puts man in Christ's stead, and makes him his own Saviour, in a respect in which Christ only is the Saviour: and so it is a doctrine contrary to the nature and design of the gospel, which is to abase man, and to ascribe all the glory of our salvation to Christ the Redeemer. It is inconsistent with the doctrine of the imputation of Christ's righteousness, which is a gospel doctrine. Here I would,

1. Explain what we mean by the imputation of Christ's righteousness.
2. Prove the thing intended by it to be true.
3. Show that this doctrine is utterly inconsistent with the doctrine of our being justified by our own virtue or sincere obedience.

First, I would explain what we mean by the imputation of Christ's righteousness. Sometimes the expression is taken by our divines in a larger sense, for the imputation of all that Christ did and suffered for our redemption, whereby we are free from guilt, and stand righteous in the sight of God; and so implies the imputation both of Christ's satisfaction and obedience. But here I intend it in a stricter sense, for the imputation of that righteousness or moral goodness that consists in the obedience to Christ. And by that righteousness being imputed to us, is meant no other than this, that that righteousness of Christ is accepted for us, and admitted instead of that perfect inherent righteousness that ought to be in ourselves: Christ's perfect obedience shall be reckoned to our account, so that we shall have the benefit of it, as though we had performed it ourselves: and so we suppose that a title to eternal life is given us as the reward of this righteousness. The Scripture uses the word *impute*

in this sense, viz., for reckoning any thing belonging to any person, to another person's account: as Philemon 18, "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee aught, put that on mine account." In the original it is τουτο εμοι ελλογει, *impute that to me.* It is a word of the same root with that which is translated *impute*, Rom. iv. 6, "To whom God imputeth righteousness without works." And it is the very same word that is used in Rom. v. 13, that is translated *impute*, "sin is not imputed when there is no law."

The opposers of this doctrine suppose that there is an absurdity in it: they say that to suppose that God imputes Christ's obedience to us, is to suppose that God is mistaken, and thinks that we performed that obedience that Christ performed. But why cannot that righteousness be reckoned to our account, and be accepted for us, without any such absurdity? Why is there any more absurdity in it, than in a merchant's transferring debt or credit from one man's account to another, when one man pays a price for another, so that it shall be accepted, as if that other had paid it? Why is there any more absurdity in supposing that Christ's obedience is imputed to us, than that his satisfaction is imputed? If Christ has suffered the penalty of the law for us, and in our stead, then it will follow, that his suffering that penalty is imputed to us, i. e., that it is accepted for us, and in our stead, and is reckoned to our account, as though we had suffered it. But why may not his obeying the law of God be as rationally reckoned to our account, as his suffering the penalty of the law? Why may not a price to bring into debt, be as rationally transferred from one person's account to another, as a price to pay a debt? Having thus explained what we mean by the imputation of Christ's righteousness, I proceed,

Secondly, To prove that the righteousness of Christ is thus imputed.

1. There is the very same need of Christ's obeying the law in our stead, in order to the reward, as of his suffering the penalty of the law in our stead, in order to our escaping the penalty; and the same reason why one should be accepted on our account, as the other. There is the same need of one as the other, that the law of God might be answered: one was as requisite to answer the law as the other. This is certain, that that was the reason why there was need that Christ should suffer the penalty for us, even that the law might be answered; for this the Scripture plainly teaches. This is given as the reason why Christ was made a curse for us, that the law threatened a curse to us, Gal. iii. 10, 13. But the same law that fixes the curse of God as the consequent of not continuing in all things written in the law to do them, verse 10, has as much fixed doing those things as an antecedent of living in them (as verse 12, the next verse but one). There is as much of a connection established in one case as in the other. There is therefore exactly the same need, from the law, of perfect obedience being fulfilled in order to our obtaining the reward, as there is of death's being suffered in order to our escaping the punishment; or the same necessity by the law, of perfect obedience preceding life, as there is of disobedience being succeeded by death. The law is, without doubt, as much of an established rule in one case as in the other.

Christ by suffering the penalty, and so making atonement for us, only removes the guilt of our sins, and so sets us in the same state that Adam was the first moment of his creation: and it is no more fit that we should obtain eternal life only on that account, than that Adam should have the reward of eternal life, or of a confirmed and unalterable state of hapiness, the first moment of his existence, without any obedience at all. Adam was not to have the reward merely on the account of his being innocent; if so, he would have had it fixed upon him at once, as soon as ever he was created; for he was as innocent then

as he could be; but he was to have the reward on the account of his activeness in obedience; not on the account merely of his not having done ill, but on the account of his doing well.

So on the same account we have not eternal life merely on the account of being void of guilt (as Adam was at first existence), which we have by the atonement of Christ; but on the account of Christ's activeness in obedience and doing well. Christ is our second federal head, and is called the second Adam, 1 Cor. xv. 22, because he acted the part for us that the first Adam should have done. When he had undertaken for us to stand in our stead, he was looked upon and treated as though he were guilty with our guilt; and by his satisfying or bearing the penalty, he did as it were free himself from this guilt. But by this the second Adam did only bring himself into the state that the first Adam was in on the first moment of his existence, viz., a state of mere freedom from guilt; and hereby indeed was free from any obligation to suffer punishment: but this being supposed, there was need of something further, even a positive obedience, in order to his obtaining, as our second Adam, the reward of eternal life.

God saw meet to place man first in a state of trial, and not to give him a title to eternal life as soon as he had made him; because it was his will that he should first give honor to his authority, by fully submitting to it, in will and act, and perfectly obeying his law. God insisted upon it, that his holy majesty and law should have their due acknowledgment and honor from man, such as became the relation he stood in to that Being that created him, before he would bestow the reward of confirmed and everlasting happiness upon him; and therefore God gave him a law when he created him, that he might have opportunity, by giving the due honor to his authority in obeying it, to obtain this happiness. It therefore became Christ, seeing that in assuming man to himself, he sought a title to this eternal happiness for him after he had broken the law, that he himself should become subject to God's authority, and be in the form of a servant, that he might do that honor to God's authority for him, by his obedience, which God at first required of man as the condition of his having a title to that reward. Christ came into the world to that end, to render the honor of God's authority and law consistent with the salvation and eternal life of sinners; he came to save them, and withal to assert and vindicate the honor of the lawgiver, and his holy law. Now if the sinner, after his sin was satisfied for, had eternal life bestowed upon him without active righteousness, the honor of his law would not be sufficiently vindicated. Supposing this were possible, that the sinner himself could, by suffering, pay the debt, and afterwards be in the same state that he was in before his probation, that is to say, negatively righteous, or merely without guilt; if he now at last should have eternal life bestowed upon him, without performing that condition of obedience; then God would recede from his law, and would give the promised reward, and his law never have respect and honor shown to it, in that way of being obeyed. But now Christ, by subjecting himself to the law, and obeying of it, has done great honor to the law, and to the authority of God who gave it. That so glorious a person should become subject to the law, and fulfil it, has done much more honor to it, than if mere man had obeyed it. It was a thing infinitely honorable to God, that a person of infinite dignity was not ashamed to call him his God, and to adore and obey him as such: this was more to God's honor than if any mere creature, of any possible degree of excellency and dignity, had so done.

It is absolutely necessary, that in order to a sinner's being justified, the righteousness of some other should be reckoned to his account; for it is declar-

ed, that the person justified is looked upon as (in himself) ungodly; but God neither will nor can justify a person without a righteousness; for justification is manifestly a *forensic* term, as the word is used in Scripture, and the thing a judicial thing, or the act of a judge: so that if a person should be justified without a righteousness, the judgment would not be according to truth: the sentence of justification would be a false sentence, unless there be a righteousness performed that is by the judge properly looked upon as his. To say, that God does not justify the sinner without sincere, though an imperfect obedience, does not help the case; for an imperfect righteousness before a judge is no righteousness. To accept of something that falls short of the rule, instead of something else that answers the rule, is no judicial act, or act of a judge, but a pure act of sovereignty. An imperfect righteousness is no righteousness before a judge; for "righteousness (as one observes) is a relative thing, and has always relation to a law. The formal nature of righteousness, properly understood, lies in a conformity of actions to that which is the rule and measure of them." Therefore that only is righteousness in the sight of a judge that answers the law.* The law is the judge's rule: if he pardons and hides what really is, and so does not pass sentence according to what things are in themselves, he either does not act the part of a judge, or else judges falsely. The very notion of judging is to determine what is, and what is not, in any one's case. The judge's work is twofold; it is to determine first what is fact, and then whether what is in fact be according to rule, or according to the law. If a judge has no rule or law established beforehand, by which he should proceed in judging, he has no foundation to go upon in judging, he has no opportunity to be a judge; nor is it possible that he should do the part of a judge. To judge without a law, or rule by which to judge, is impossible; for the very notion of judging, is to determine whether the object of judgment be according to rule; and therefore God has declared, that when he acts as a judge, he will not justify the wicked, and cannot clear the guilty; and, by parity of reason, cannot justify without righteousness.

* That it is perfect obedience, that is what is called righteousness in the New Testament, and that this righteousness, or perfect obedience, is by God's fixed unalterable rule, the condition of justification, is from the plain evidence of truth, confessed by a certain great man, that nobody will think to be a likely person to be blinded by a prejudice in favor of the doctrine we are maintaining, and one who did not receive this doctrine, viz., Mr. Locke in his *Reasonableness of Christianity, as delivered in the Scriptures*, Vol. II. of his works, p. 474: "To one that thus unbiassed reads the Scripture what Adam fell from is visible, was the state of perfect obedience which is called *justice* in the New Testament, though the word, which in the original signifies justice, be translated *righteousness*." Ibid. p. 476, 477, "For righteousness, or an exact obedience to the law seems by the Scripture to have a claim of right to eternal life. Rom. iv. 4, *To him that worketh*, i. e., does the works of the law, *is the reward reckoned, not reckoned of grace, but of debt.* On the other side, it seems the unalterable purpose of the divine justice, that no unrighteous person, no one that is guilty of any breach of the law, should be in paradise; but that the wages of sin should be to every man, as it was to Adam, an exclusion of him out of that happy state of immortality, and bring death upon him. And this is so conformable to the eternal and established law of right and wrong, that it is spoken of too as it could not be otherwise. Here then we have the standing and fixed measures of life and death; immortality and bliss belonging to the righteous. Those who have lived in an exact conformity to the law of God are out of the reach of death; but an exclusion from paradise and loss of immortality, is the portion of sinners, of all those who have any way broke that law, and failed of a complete obedience to it, by the guilt of any one trangression. And thus mankind, by the law, are put upon the issues of life or death, as they are righteous or unrighteous, just or unjust, i. e., exact performers or trangressors of the law." Again, in p. 477: "The law of works then in short is, that law which requires perfect obedience, without any remission or abatement; so that by that law a man cannot be just, or justified, without an exact performance of every tittle. Such a perfect obedience in the New Testament, is termed *δικαιοσυνη*, which we translate *righteousness*." In which last passage it is also to be noted, that Mr. Locke, by the law of works does not understand the ceremonial law, but the covenant of works: as he more fully expresses himself in the next paragraph but one. Where this law of works was to be found, the New Testament tells us, viz., in the law delivered by Moses: John i. 17, *The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.* Chap. vii. 19, *Did not Moses give you the law*, says our Saviour, *and yet none of you kept the law?* And that is the law which he speaks of, ver 23: *This do and thou shalt live.* This is that which St. Paul so often styles *the law* without any other distinction: Rom. ii. 13, *Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law are justified.* It is needless to quote any more places, his epistles are all full of it, especially this to the Romans.

And the scheme of the old law's being abrogated and a new law introduced, will not help at all in this difficulty; for an imperfect righteousness cannot answer the law of God that we are under, whether that be an old one or a new one; for every law requires perfect obedience to itself. Every rule whatsoever requires perfect conformity to itself; it is a contradiction to suppose otherwise For to say, that there is a law that does not require perfect obedience to itself, is to say that there is a law that does not require all that it requires. That law that now forbids sin, is certainly the law that we are now under (let that be an old one or new one); or else it is not sin. That which is not forbidden, and is the breach of no law, is not sin. But if we are now forbidden to commit sin, then it is by a law that we are now under; for surely we are neither under the forbiddings nor commanding of a law that we are not under. Therefore, if all sin is now forbidden, then we are now under a law that requires perfect obedience; and therefore nothing can be accepted as a righteousness in the sight of our Judge, but perfect righteousness. So that our Judge cannot justify us, unless he sees a perfect righteousness, some way belonging to us, either performed by ourselves, or by another, and justly and duly reckoned to our account.

God doth, in the sentence of justification pronounce a man perfectly righteous, or else he would need a further justification after he is justified. His sins being removed by Christ's atonement, is not sufficient for his justification; for justifying a man, as has been already shown, is not merely pronouncing him innocent, or without guilt, but standing right with regard to the rule that he is under, and righteous unto life: but this, according to the established rule of nature, reason, and divine appointment, is a positive, perfect righteousness.

As there is the same need that Christ's obedience should be reckoned to our account, as that his atonement should; so there is the same reason why it should. And if Adam had persevered, and finished his course of obedience, we should have received the benefit of his obedience, as much as now we have the mischief of his disobedience; so in like manner, there is reason that we should receive the benefit of the second Adam's obedience, as of his atonement of our disobedience. Believers are represented in Scripture as being so in Christ, as that they are legally one, or accepted as one, by the Supreme Judge: Christ has assumed our nature, and has so assumed all, in that nature that belongs to him, into such a union with himself, that he is become their Head, and has taken them to be his members. And therefore, what Christ has done in our nature, whereby he did honor to the law and authority of God by his acts, as well as the reparation to the honor of the law by his sufferings, is reckoned to the believer's account; so as that the believer should be made happy, because it was so well and worthily done by his Head, as well as freed from being miserable, because he has suffered for our ill and unworthy doing.

When Christ had once undertaken with God to stand for us, and put himself under our law, by that law he was obliged to suffer, and by the same law he was obliged to obey: by the same law, after he had taken man's guilt upon him, he himself being our surety, could not be acquitted until he had suffered, nor rewarded until he had obeyed: but he was not acquitted as a private person, but as our Head, and believers are acquitted in his acquittance; nor was he accepted to a reward for his obedience, as a private person, but as our Head, and we are accepted to a reward in his acceptance. The Scripture teaches us that when Christ was raised from the dead, he was justified; which justification, as I have already shown, implies, both his acquittance from our guilt, and his acceptance to the exaltation and glory that was the reward of his obedience: but believers, as soon as they believe, are admitted to partake with Christ in

this his justification: hence we are told, that he was "raised again for our justification," Rom. iv. 25, which is true, not only of that part of his justification that consists in his acquittance, but also his acceptance to his reward. The Scripture teaches us that he is exalted, and gone to heaven to take possession of glory in our name, as our forerunner, Heb. vi. 20. We are, as it were, both raised up together with Christ, and also made to sit together with Christ, in heavenly places, and in him, Eph. ii. 6.

If it be objected here, that there is this reason, why what Christ suffered should be accepted on our account, rather than the obedience he performed, that he was obliged to obedience for himself, but was not obliged to suffer but only on our account; to this I answer, that Christ was not obliged, on his own account, to undertake to obey. Christ, in his original circumstances, was in no subjection to the Father, being altogether equal with him: he was under no obligation to put himself in man's stead, and under man's law; or to put himself into any state of subjection to God whatsoever. There was a transaction between the Father and the Son, that was antecedent to Christ's becoming man, and being made under the law, wherein he undertook to put himself under the law, and both to obey and to suffer; in which transaction these things were already virtually done in the sight of God; as is evident by this, that God acted on the ground of that transaction, justifying and saving sinners, as if the things undertaken had been actually performed long before they were performed indeed. And therefore, without doubt, in order to the estimating the value and validity of what Christ did and suffered, we must look back to that transaction, wherein these things were first undertaken, and virtually done in the sight of God, and see what capacity and circumstances Christ acted in then, and then we shall find that Christ was under no manner of obligation, either to obey the law, or suffer the penalty of it. After this he was equally under obligation to both; for henceforward he stood as our surety or representative: and therefore this consequent obligation may be as much of an objection against the validity of his suffering the penalty, as against his obedience. But if we look to that original transaction between the Father and the Son, wherein both these were undertaken and accepted as virtually done in the sight of the Father, we shall find Christ acting with regard to both, as one perfectly in his own right, and under no manner of previous obligation to hinder the validity of either.

2. To suppose that all that Christ does is only to make atonement for us by suffering, is to make him our Saviour but in part. It is to rob him of half his glory as a Saviour. For if so, all that he does is to deliver us from hell; he does not purchase heaven for us. The adverse scheme supposes that he purchases heaven for us, in the sense, that he satisfies for the imperfections of our obedience, and so purchase, that our sincere imperfect obedience might be accepted as the condition of eternal life; and so purchases an opportunity for us to obtain heaven by our own obedience. But to purchase heaven for us only in this sense, is to purchase it in no sense at all; for all of it comes to no more than a satisfaction for our sins, or removing the penalty by suffering in our stead: for all the purchasing they speak of, that our imperfect obedience should be accepted, is only his satisfying for the sinful imperfections of our obedience; or (which is the same thing) making atonement for the sin that our obedience is attended with. But that is not purchasing heaven, merely to set us at liberty again, that we may go and get heaven by what we do ourselves; all that Christ does is only to pay a debt for us; there is no positive purchase of any good. We are taught in Scripture that heaven is purchased for us; it is called the *purchased possession*, Eph. i. 14. The gospel proposes the eternal inheritance, not

to be acquired, as the first covenant did, but as already acquired and purchased. But he that pays a man's debt for him, and so delivers him from slavery, cannot be said to purchase an estate for him, merely because he sets him at liberty, so that henceforward he has an opportunity to get an estate by his own hand labor. So that according to this scheme, the saints in heaven have no reason to thank Christ for purchasing heaven for them, or redeeming them to God, and making them kings and priests, as we have an account that they do, in Rev. v. 9.

3. Justification by the righteousness and obedience of Christ, is a doctrine that the Scripture teaches in very full terms: Rom. v. 18, 19, "By the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners: so by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous." Here in one verse we are told, that we have justification by Christ's righteousness; and, that there might be no room to understand the righteousness spoken of, merely of Christ's atonement by his suffering the penalty, in the next verse it is put in other terms, and asserted, that it is by Christ's obedience that we are made righteous. It is scarce possible any thing should be more full and determined: the terms, taken singly, are such as do fix their own meaning, and taken together, they fix the meaning of each other: the words show that we are justified by that righteousness of Christ that consists in his obedience, and that we are made righteous or justified by that obedience of his, that is, his righteousness, or moral goodness before God.

Here possibly it may be objected, that this text means only, that we are justified by Christ's passive obedience

To this I answer, whether we call it active or passive, it alters not the case as to the present argument, as long as it is evident by the words, that it is not merely under the notion of an atonement for disobedience, or a satisfaction for unrighteousness, but under the notion of a positive obedience, and a righteousness or moral goodness, that it justifies us or makes us righteous; because both the words *righteousness* and *obedience* are used, and used too as the opposites of sin and disobedience, and an offence. "Therefore as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation: even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men to justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners: so by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous." Now, what can be meant by righteousness, when spoken of as the opposite to sin, or moral evil, but only moral goodness? What is the righteousness that is the opposite of an offence, but only the behavior that is well pleasing? And what can be meant by obedience, when spoken of as the opposite of disobedience, or going contrary to a command, but a positive obeying, and an actual complying with the command? So that there is no room for any invented distinction of active and passive, to hurt the argument from this Scripture, as long as it is evident by it as any thing can be, that believers are justified by the righteousness and obedience of Christ, under the notion of his moral goodness, and his positive obeying, and actual complying with the commands of God, and that behavior of his, that, because of its conformity to his commands, was well pleasing in his sight. This is all that ever any need to desire to have granted in this dispute.

By this it appears that if Christ's dying be here included in the words *righteousness* and *obedience*, it is not merely as a propitiation, or bearing a penalty of a broken law in our stead, but as his voluntary submitting and yielding himself to those sufferings, was an act of obedience to the Father's commands, and so was a part of his positive righteousness, or moral goodness.

Indeed all obedience, considered under the notion of obedience or righteousness, is something active, something that is done in active and voluntary compliance with a command; whether that which we do in obedience is something easy, and something that may be done without suffering, or whether it be something hard and difficult; yet as it is obedience, or righteousness, or moral goodness, it must be considered as something voluntary and active. If any one is commanded to go through difficulties and sufferings, and he, in compliance with this command, voluntarily does it, he properly obeys in so doing; and as he voluntarily does it, in compliance with a command, his obedience is as active as any whatsoever. It is the same sort of obedience, a thing of the very same nature, as when a man, in compliance with a command, does a piece of hard service, or goes through hard labor; and there is no room to distinguish between such obedience and other that is more easy, to make a different sort of obedience of it; as if it were a thing of quite a different nature, by such opposite terms as active and passive: all the distinction that can be pretended, is that which is between obeying an easy command and a difficult one. But is not the obedience itself of the same nature, because the commands to be obeyed are some of them more difficult than others? Is there from hence any foundation to make two species of obedience, one active and the other passive? There is no appearance of any such distinction ever entering into the hearts of any of the penmen of Scripture.

It is true, that of late, when a man refuses to obey the precept of a human law, but patiently yields himself up to suffer the penalty of the law, it is called passive obedience: but this I suppose is only a modern use of the word obedience; surely it is a sense of the word that the Scripture is a perfect stranger to; and it is improperly called obedience, unless there be such a precept in the law, that he shall yield himself patiently to suffer, to which his so doing shall be an active, voluntary conformity. There may in some sense be said to be a conformity to the law in a person's suffering the penalty of the law; but no other conformity to the law is properly called obedience to it but an active, voluntary conformity to the precepts of it: the word *obey* is often found in Scripture with respect to the law of God to man, but never in any other sense.

It is true that Christ's willingly undergoing those sufferings which he endured, is a great part of that obedience or righteousness by which we are justified. The sufferings of Christ are respected in Scripture under a twofold consideration, either merely as his being substituted for us, or put into our stead in suffering the penalty of the law; and so his sufferings are considered as a satisfaction and propitiation for sin: or as he, in obedience to a law or command of the Father, voluntarily submitted himself to those sufferings, and actively yielded himself up to bear them; and so they are considered as his righteousness, and a part of his active obedience. Christ underwent death in obedience to the command of the Father: Psalm xl. 6, 7, 8, "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." John x. 17, 18, "I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." John xviii. 11, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall not I drink it?" And this is part, and indeed the principal part of that active obedience that we are justified by.

It can be no just objection against this, that that command of the Father to Christ, that he should lay down his life, was no part of the law that we had broken; and therefore that his obeying this command could be no part of that obedience that he performed for us, because we needed that he should obey no other law for us, but only that which we had broken or failed of obeying. For although it must be the same legislative authority, whose honor is repaired by Christ's obedience, that we have injured by our disobedience; yet there is no need that the law that Christ obeys should be precisely the same that Adam was to have obeyed, in that sense, that there should be no positive precepts wanting, nor any added: there was wanting the precept about the forbidden fruit, and there was added the ceremonial law. The thing required was perfect obedience: it is no matter whether the positive precepts were the same, if they were equivalent. The positive precepts that Christ was to obey, were much more than equivalent to what was wanting, because infinitely more difficult, particularly the command that he had received to lay down his life, which was his principal act of obedience, and which above all others is concerned in our justification. As that act of disobedience by which we fell, was disobedience to a positive precept that Christ never was under, viz., that of abstaining from the tree of knowledge of good and evil; so that act of obedience by which principally we are redeemed, is obedience to a positive precept that Adam never was under, viz., the precept of laying down his life. It was suitable that it should be a positive precept, that should try both Adam's and Christ's obedience: such precepts are the greatest and most proper trial of obedience; because in them, the mere authority and will of the legislator is the sole ground of the obligation (and nothing in the nature of the things themselves); and therefore they are the greatest trial of any person's respect to that authority and will.

The law that Christ was subject to, and obeyed, was in some sense the same that was given to Adam. There are innumerable particular duties that are required by the law only conditionally; and in such circumstances, are comprehended in some great and general rule of that law. Thus, for instance, there are innumerable acts of respect and obedience to men, which are required by the law of nature (which was a law given to Adam), which yet be not required absolutely, but upon many prerequisite conditions; as, that there be men standing in such relations to us, and that they gave forth such commands, and the like. So many acts of respect and obedience to God are included, in like manner, in the moral law conditionally, or such and such things being supposed; as Abraham's going about to sacrifice his son, the Jews circumcising their children when eight days old, and Adam's not eating the forbidden fruit; they are virtually comprehended in that great general rule of the moral law, that we should obey God, and be subject to him in whatsoever he pleases to command us. Certainly the moral law does as much require us to obey God's positive commands, as it requires us to obey the positive commands of our parents. And thus all that Adam, and all that Christ was commanded, even his observing the rites and ceremonies of the Jewish worship, and his laying down his life, was virtually included in the same great law.*

* Thus Mr. Locke in his *Reasonableness of Christianity as delivered in the Scriptures*, Vol. II. of his work, p. 478: "Nay, *whatever God requires anywhere to be done*, without making any allowance for faith, that is a part of the law of works. So that forbidding Adam to eat of the tree of knowledge, was part of the law of works. Only we must take notice here, that some of God's positive commands being for peculiar ends, and suited to particular circumstances of times, places and persons, have a limited, and only temporary obligation, by virtue of God's positive injunction. Such as was that part of Moses' law which concerned the outward worship or political constitution of the Jews, and is called the ceremonial and judaical law." Again, p. 479, "Thus then as to the law in short, the civil and ritual part of the law delivered by Moses, obliges not Christians, though to the Jews it were a part of the law of

It is no objection against the last mentioned thing, even Christ's laying down his life, its being included in the moral law given to Adam; because that law itself allowed of no occasion for any such thing; for the moral law virtually includes all right acts, on all possible occasions, even occasions that the law itself allows not: thus we are obliged by the moral law to mortify our lusts, and repent of our sins, though that law allows of no lust to mortify, or sin to repent of

There is indeed but one great law of God, and that is the same law that says, "if thou sinnest, thou shalt die;" and "cursed is every one that continues not in all things contained in this law to do them." All duties of positive institution are virtually comprehended in this law: and therefore, if the Jews broke the ceremonial law, it exposed them to the penalty of the law, or covenant of works, which threatened, "thou shalt surely die." The law is the eternal and unalterable rule of righteousness between God and man, and therefore is the rule of judgment, by which all that a man does shall be either justified or condemned; and no sin exposes to damnation, but by the law: so now he that refuses to obey the precepts that require an attendance on the sacraments of the New Testament, is exposed to damnation, by virtue of the law or covenant of works. It may moreover be argued, that all sins whatsoever are breaches of the law or covenant of works, because all sins, even breaches of the positive precepts, as well as others, have atonement by the death of Christ: but what Christ died for, was to satisfy the law, or to bear the curse of the law; as appears by Gal. iii. 10—13, and Rom. viii. 3, 4.

So Christ's laying down his life might be part of that obedience by which we are justified, though it was a positive precept not given to Adam. It was doubtless Christ's main act of obedience, because it was obedience to a command that was attended with immensely the greatest difficulty, and so to a command that was the greatest trial of his obedience. His respect shown to God in it, and his honor to God's authority was proportionably great: it is spoken of in Scripture as Christ's principal act of obedience. Philip. ii. 7, 8, "But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and, being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Heb. v. 8, "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things that he suffered." It was mainly by this act of obedience that Christ purchased so glorious a reward for himself; as in that place in Philippians, ii. 8, 9, "He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name." And it therefore follows from what has been already said, that it is mainly by this act of obedience that believers in Christ also have the reward of glory, or come to partake with Christ in his glory. We are as much saved by the death of Christ, as his yielding himself to die was an act of obedience, as we are, as it was a propitiation for our sins: for as it was not the only act of obedience that merited, he having performed meritorious acts of obedience through the whole course of his life; so neither was it the only suffering that was propitiatory; all his sufferings through the whole course of his life being propitiatory, as well as every act of obedience meritorious: indeed this was his principal suffering; and it was as much his principal act of obedience.

Hence we may see how that the death of Christ did not only make atonement, but also merited eternal life; and hence we may see how by the blood of Christ we are not only redeemed from sin, but redeemed unto God; and there-

works: it being a part of the law of nature, that men ought to obey every positive law of God, whenever he shall please to make any such addition to the law of his nature."

fore the Scripture seems everywhere to attribute the whole of salvation to the blood of Christ: this precious blood is as much the main price by which heaven is purchased, as it is the main price by which we are redeemed from hell The positive righteousness of Christ, or that price by which he merited, was of equal value with that by which he satisfied; for indeed it was the same price. He spilled his blood to satisfy, and by reason of the infinite dignity of his person, his sufferings were looked upon as of infinite value, and equivalent to the eternal sufferings of a finite creature: and he spilled his blood out of respect to the honor of God's majesty and in submission to his authority, who had commanded him so to do: and his obedience therein was of infinite value; both because of the dignity of the person that performed it, and because he put himself to infinite expense to perform it, whereby the infinite degree of his regard to God's authority appeared.

One would wonder what the Arminians mean by Christ's merits. They talk of Christ's merits as much as any body, and yet deny the imputation of Christ's positive righteousness. What should there be that any one should merit or deserve any thing by, besides righteousness or goodness? If any thing that Christ did or suffered, merited or deserved any thing, it was by virtue of the goodness or righteousness, or holiness of it; if Christ's sufferings and death merited heaven, it must be because there was an excellent righteousness and transcendent moral goodness in that act of laying down his life: and if by that excellent righteousness he merited heaven for us; then surely that righteousness is reckoned to our account, that we have the benefit of it, or which is the same thing, it is imputed to us.

Thus, I hope I have made it evident, that the righteousness of Christ is indeed imputed to us. I proceed now to the

Third and last thing under this argument, that this doctrine, of the imputation of Christ's righteousness, is utterly inconsistent with the doctrine of our being justified by our own virtue or sincere obedience. If acceptance to God's favor, and a title to life, be given to believers as the reward of Christ's obedience, then it is not given as the reward of our own obedience. In what respect soever Christ is our Saviour, that doubtless excludes our being our own saviours in the same respect that Christ is; it will thence follow, that the salvation of Christ is needless in that respect; according to the apostle's reasoning, Gal. v. 4, "Christ is rendered of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law." Doubtless, it is Christ's prerogative to be our Saviour in that sense wherein he is our Saviour: and therefore if it be by his obedience that we are justified, then it is not by our own obedience.

Here perhaps it may be said, that a title to salvation is not directly given as the reward of our obedience; for that is not by any thing of ours, but only by Christ's satisfaction and righteousness; but yet an interest in that satisfaction and righteousness is given as a reward of our obedience.

But this does not at all help the case; for this is to ascribe as much to our obedience as if we ascribed salvation to it directly, without the intervention of Christ's righteousness: for it would be as great a thing for God to give us Christ, and his satisfaction and righteousness in reward for our obedience, as to give us heaven immediately; it would be as great a reward, and as great a testimony of respect to our obedience: and if God gives as great a thing as salvation for our obedience, why could he not as well give salvation itself directly? And then there would have been no need of Christ's righteousness. And indeed if God gives us Christ, or an interest in him, properly in reward of our obedience, he does really give us salvation in reward for our obedience

for the former implies the latter; yea it implies it, as the greater implies the less. So that indeed it exalts our virtue and obedience more, to suppose that God gives us Christ in reward of that virtue and obedience, than if he should give salvation without Christ.

The thing that the Scripture guards and militates against, is our imagining that it is our own goodness, virtue, or excellency, that instates us in God's acceptance and favor. But to suppose that God gives us an interest in Christ in reward for our virtue, is as great an argument that it instates us in God's favor, as if he bestowed a title to eternal life as its direct reward. If God gives us an interest in Christ as a reward of our obedience, it will then follow that we are instated in God's acceptance and favor by our own obedience, antecedent to our having an interest in Christ. For a rewarding any one's excellency, evermore supposes favor and acceptance on the account of that excellency: it is the very notion of a reward, that it is a good thing, bestowed in testimony of respect and favor for the virtue or excellency rewarded. So that it is not by virtue of our interest in Christ and his merits, that we first come into favor with God, according to this scheme; for we are in God's favor before we have any interest in those merits; in that we have an interest in those merits given as a fruit of God's favor, for our own virtue. If our interest in Christ be the fruit of God's favor, then it cannot be the ground of it. If God did not accept us, and had no favor for us for our own excellency, he never would bestow so great a reward upon us, as a right in Christ's satisfaction and righteousness. So that such a scheme destroys itself; for it supposes that Christ's satisfaction and righteousness are necessary for us to recommend us to the favor of God; and yet supposes that we have God's favor and acceptance before we have Christ's satisfaction and righteousness, and have these given as a fruit of God's favor.

Indeed, neither salvation itself, nor Christ the Saviour, are given as a reward of any thing in man: they are not given as a reward of faith, nor any thing else of ours: we are not united to Christ as a reward of our faith, but have union with him by faith, only as faith is the very act of uniting or closing on our part. As when a man offers himself to a woman in marriage, he does not give himself to her as a reward of her receiving him in marriage: her receiving him is not considered as a worthy deed in her, for which he rewards her by giving himself to her; but it is by her receiving him that the union is made, by which she hath him for her husband: it is on her part the unition itself. By these things it appears, how contrary to the scheme of the gospel of Christ their scheme is, who say that faith justifies as a principle of obedience, or as a leading act of obedience; or (as others) the sum and comprehension of all evangelical obedience or virtue that is in faith, that is the thing that gives it its justifying influence; and that is the same thing as to say, that we are justified by our own obedience, virtue, or goodness.

Having thus considered the evidence of the truth of the doctrine, I now proceed,

III. To show in what sense the acts of a Christian life, or of evangelical obedience, may be looked upon to be concerned in this affair.

From what has been said already, it is manifest that they cannot have any concern in this affair as good works, or by virtue of any moral goodness in them; not as works of the law, or as that moral excellency, or any part of it, that is the answering or fulfilment of that great and universal, and everlasting law or covenant of works that the great Lawgiver has established, as the highest and unalterable rule of judgment, which Christ alone answers, or does any thing towards it.

And it having been shown out of the Scripture that it is only by faith, or the soul's receiving and uniting to the Saviour that has wrought our righteousness, that we are justified; it therefore remains, that the acts of a Christian life cannot be concerned in this affair any otherwise than as they imply, and are the expressions of faith, and may be looked upon as so many acts of reception of Christ the Saviour.

But the determining what concern acts of Christian obedience can have in justification in this respect, will depend on the resolving of another point, viz., Whether any one act of faith besides the first act, has any concern in our justification, or how far perseverance in faith, or the continued and renewed acts of faith, have influence in this affair.

And it seems manifest that justification is by the first act of faith, in some respects, in a peculiar manner, because a sinner is actually and finally justified as soon as he has performed one act of faith; and faith in its first act does, virtually at least, depend on God for perseverance, and entitles to this among other benefits. But yet the perseverance of faith is not excluded in this affair; it is not only certainly connected with justification, but it is not to be excluded from that on which the justification of a sinner has a dependence, or that by which he is justified.

I have shown that the way in which justification has a dependence on faith, is that it is the qualification on which the congruity of an interest in the righteousness of Christ depends, or wherein such a fitness consists. But the consideration of the perseverance of faith cannot be excluded out of this congruity of an interest in Christ's righteousness, and so in the eternal benefits purchased by it, because faith is that by which the soul hath union or oneness with Christ; and there is a natural congruity in it, that they that are one with Christ should have a joint interest with him in his eternal benefits; but yet this congruity depends on its being an abiding union. As it is needful that the branch should abide in the vine, in order to its receiving the lasting benefits of the root; so it is necessary that the soul should abide in Christ, in order to its receiving those lasting benefits of God's final acceptance and favor. John xv. 6, 7, "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Verse 9, 10, "Continue ye in my love. If ye keep (or abide) my commandments, ye shall abide in my love: even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." There is the same reason why it is necessary that the union with Christ should remain, as why it should be begun; why it should continue to be, as why it should once be: if it should be begun without remaining, the beginning would be in vain. In order to the soul's being now in a justified state, and now free from condemnation, it is necessary that it should now be in Christ, and not only that it should once have been in him. Rom. viii. 1, "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." The soul is saved in Christ, as being now in him, when the salvation is bestowed, and not merely as remembering that it once was in him. Phil. iii. 9, "That I may be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." 1 John ii. 28, "And now, little children, abide in him; that when he shall appear, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before him at his coming." In order to persons' being blessed after death, it is necessary not only that they should once be in him, but that they should die in him. Rev. xiv. 13, "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord."

And there is the same reason why faith, the uniting qualification, should re-

main, in order to the union's remaining; as why it should once be, in order to the union's once being.

So that although the sinner is actually and finally justified on the first act of faith, yet the perseverance of faith, even then, comes into consideration, as one thing on which the fitness of acceptance to life depends. God, in the act of justification, which is passed on a sinner's first believing, has respect to perseverance, as being virtually contained in that first act of faith; and it is looked upon, and taken by him that justifies, as being as it were a property in that faith that then is: God has respect to the believer's continuance in faith, and he is justified by that, as though it already were, because by divine establishment it shall follow; and it being by divine constitution connected with that first faith, as much as if it were a property in it, it is then considered as such, and so justification is not suspended; but were it not for this, it would be needful that it should be suspended, till the sinner had actually persevered in faith.

And that it is so, that God in that act of final justification that he passes at the sinner's conversion, has respect to perseverance in faith, and future acts of faith, as being virtually implied in that first act, is further manifest by this, viz., that in a sinner's justification at his conversion, there is virtually contained a forgiveness as to eternal and deserved punishment, not only of all past sins, but also of all future infirmities and acts of sin that they shall be guilty of; because that first justification is decisive and final. And yet pardon, in the order of nature, properly follows the crime, and also follows those acts of repentance and faith that respect the crime pardoned, as is manifest both from reason and Scripture. David, in the beginning of Psalm xxxii., speaks of the forgiveness of sins of his, that were doubtless committed long after he was first godly, as being consequent on those sins, and on his repentance and faith with respect to them; and yet this forgiveness is spoken of by the apostle in the 4th of Romans, as an instance of justification by faith. Probably the sin David there speaks of is the same that he committed in the matter of Uriah, and so the pardon the same with that release from death or eternal punishment, that the prophet Nathan speaks of, 2 Sam. xii. 13: "The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." Not only does the manifestation of this pardon follow the sin in the order of time, but the pardon itself, in the order of nature, follows David's repentance and faith with respect to this sin; for it is spoken of in the 32d Psalm, as depending on it.

But inasmuch as a sinner, in his first justification, is forever justified and freed from all obligation to eternal punishment; it hence of necessity follows, that future faith and repentance are beheld, in that justification, as virtually contained in that first faith and repentance; because repentance of those future sins, and faith in a Redeemer, with respect to them, or, at least, the continuance of that habit and principle in the heart that has such an actual repentance and faith in its nature and tendency, is now made sure by God's promise.

If remission of sins, committed after conversion, in the order of nature, follows that faith and repentance that is after them, then it follows that future sins are respected in the first justification, no otherwise than as future faith and repentance are respected in it. And future faith and repentance are looked upon by him that justifies, as virtually implied in the first repentance and faith, in the same manner as justification from future sins is virtually implied in the first justification; which is the thing that was to be proved.

And besides, if no other act of faith could be concerned in justification but the first act, it will then follow, that Christians ought never to seek justification by any other act of faith For if justification is not to be obtained by after

acts of faith, then surely it is not a duty to seek it by such acts; and so it can never be a duty for persons after they are once converted, by faith to seek to God, or believingly to look to him for the remission of sin, or deliverance from the guilt of it, because deliverance from the guilt of sin is part of what belongs to justification. And if it be not proper for converts by faith to look to God through Christ for it, then it will follow, that it is not proper for them to pray for it; Christian prayer to God for a blessing, is but an expression of faith in God for that blessing; prayer is only the voice of faith. But if these things are so, it will follow that that petition of the Lord's prayer, *forgive us our debts*, is not proper to be put up by disciples of Christ, or to be used in Christian assemblies; and that Christ improperly directed his disciples to use that petition, when they were all of them, except Judas, converted before. The debt that Christ directs his disciples to pray for the forgiveness of, can mean nothing else but the punishment that sin deserves, or the debt that we owe to divine justice, the ten thousand talents we owe our Lord. To pray that God would forgive our debts, is undoubtedly the same thing as to pray that God would release us from obligation to due punishment; but releasing from obligation to the punishment due to sin, and forgiving the debt that we owe to divine justice, is what appertains to justification.

And then to suppose that no after acts of faith are concerned in the business of justification, and so that it is not proper for any ever to seek justification by such acts, would be forever to cut off those Christians that are doubtful concerning their first act of faith, from the joy and peace of believing. As the business of a justifying faith is to obtain pardon and peace with God, by looking to God and trusting in him for these blessings; so the joy and peace of that faith are in the apprehension of pardon and peace obtained by such a trust. This a Christian that is doubtful of his first act of faith cannot have from that act, because by the supposition, he is doubtful whether it be an act of faith, and so whether he did obtain pardon and peace by that act. The proper remedy, in such a case, is now by faith to look to God in Christ for these blessings: but he is cut off from this remedy, because he is uncertain whether he has warrant so to do; for he does not know but that he has believed already; and if so, then he has no warrant to look to God by faith for these blessings now, because, by the supposition, no new act of faith is a proper means of obtaining these blessings. And so he can never properly obtain the joy of faith; for there are acts of true faith that are very weak acts, and the first act may be so as well as others: it may be like the first motion of the infant in the womb; it may be so weak an act, that the Christian, by examining it, may never be able to determine whether it was a true act of faith or no; and it is evident from fact, and abundant experience, that many Christians are forever at a loss to determine which was their first act of faith. And those saints that have a good degree of satisfaction concerning their faith, may be subject to great declensions and falls, in which case they are liable to great fears of eternal punishment; and the proper way of deliverance, is to forsake their sin by repentance, and by faith now to come to Christ for deliverance from the deserved eternal punishment; but this it would not be, if deliverance from that punishment was not this way to be obtained.

But what is a still more plain and direct evidence of what I am now arguing for is, that that act of faith that Abraham exercised in the great promise of the covenant of grace that God made to him, of which it is expressly said, Gal. iii. 6, "it was accounted to him for righteousness," which is the grand instance and proof that the apostle so much insists upon, throughout the 4th

chapter of Romans, and 3d of Galatians, to confirm his doctrine of justification by faith alone, was not Abraham's first act of faith, but was exerted long after he had by faith forsaken his own country, Heb. xi. 8, and had been treated as an eminent friend of God.

Moreover, the Apostle Paul, in the 3d chapter of Philippians, tells us how earnestly he sought justification by faith, or to win Christ and to obtain that righteousness which was by the faith of him, in what he did after his conversion: ver. 8, 9, "For whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." And in the two next verses he expresses the same thing in other words, and tells us how he went through sufferings, and became conformable to Christ's death, that he might be a partaker with Christ in the benefit of his resurrection; which the same apostle elsewhere teaches us, is especially justification. Christ's resurrection was his justification; in this, he that was put to death in the flesh, was justified by the spirit; and he that was delivered for our offences, rose again for our justification. And the apostle tells us in the verses that follow in that 3d chapter of Philippians, that he thus sought to attain the righteousness which is through the faith of Christ, and so to partake of the benefit of his resurrection, still as though he had not already atttained, but that he continued to follow after it.

On the whole it appears, that the perseverance of faith is necessary, even to the congruity of justification; and that not the less, because a sinner is justified, and perseverance promised, on the first act of faith, but God, in that justification, has respect, not only to the past act of faith, but to his own promise of future acts, and to the fitness of a qualification beheld as yet only in his own promise.

And that perseverance in faith is thus necessary to salvation, not merely as a *sine qua non*, or as a universal concomitant of it, but by reason of such an influence and dependence, seems manifest by many Scriptures; I would mention two or three: Heb. iii. 6, "Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." Verse 14: "For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." Chap. vi. 12, "Be ye followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises." Rom. xi. 20, "Well, because of unbelief they were broken off; but thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear."

And as the congruity to a final justification depends on perseverance in faith, as well as the first act, so oftentimes the manifestation of justification in the conscience, arises a great deal more from after acts, than the first act. And all the difference whereby the first act of faith has a concern in this affair that is peculiar, seems to be, as it were, only an accidental difference, arising from the circumstance of time or it being first in order of time, and not from any peculiar respect that God has to it, or any influence it has of a peculiar nature, in the affair of our salvation.

And thus it is that a truly Christian walk, and the acts of an evangelical, childlike, believing obedience, are concerned in the affair of our justification, and seem to be sometimes so spoken of in Scripture, viz., as an expression of a persevering faith in the Son of God, the only Saviour. Faith unites to Christ, and so gives a congruity to justification, not merely as remaining a dormant principle in the heart, but as being and appearing in its active expressions.

The obedience of a Christian, so far as it is truly evangelical, and performed with the Spirit of the Son sent forth into the heart, has all relation to Christ,

the Mediator, and is but an expression of the soul's believing unition to Christ. All evangelical works are works of that faith that worketh by love; and every such act of obedience, wherein it is inward and the act of the soul, is only a new, effective act of reception of Christ, an adherence to the glorious Saviour. Hence that of the apostle, Gal. ii. 20, "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life that I now live in the flesh, is by the faith of the Son of God." And hence we are directed, in whatever we do, whether in word or deed, to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Col. iii. 17.

And that God in justification has respect not only to the first act of faith, but also to future, persevering acts, in this sense, viz., as expressed in life, seems manifest, by Rom. i. 17; "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith." And Heb. x. 38, 39, "Now the just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them that draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe, to the saving of the soul."

So that as was before said of faith, so may it be said of a childlike, believing obedience, it has no concern in justification by any virtue or excellency in it; but only as there is a reception of Christ in it. And this is no more contrary to the apostle's frequent assertion of our being justified without the works of the law, than to say, that we are justified by faith; for faith is as much a work, or act of Christian obedience, as the expressions of faith, in spiritual life and walk. And therefore, as we say that faith does not justify as a work, so we say of all these effective expressions of faith.

This is the reverse of the scheme of our modern divines, who hold, that faith justifies only as an act or expression of obedience; whereas, in truth obedience has no concern in justification, any otherwise than as an expression of faith. I now proceed,

IV. To answer objections.

Object. 1. We frequently find promises of eternal life and salvation, and sometimes of justification itself, made to our own virtue and obedience. Eternal life is promised to obedience, in Rom. ii. 7: "To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory, honor, and immortality; eternal life." And the like in innumerable other places. And justification itself is promised to that virtue of a forgiving spirit and temper in us, Matt. vi. 14: "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." All allow that justification in great part consists in the forgiveness of sins.

To this I answer,

1. These things being promised to our virtue and obedience, argues no more, than that there is a connection between them and evangelical obedience; which, I have already observed, is not the thing in dispute. All that can be proved by obedience and salvation being connected in the promise, is, that obedience and salvation are connected in fact; which nobody denies; and whether it be owned or denied, is, as has been shown, nothing to the purpose. There is no need that an admission to a title to salvation, should be given on the account of our obedience, in order to the promises being true. If we find such a promise, that he that obeys shall be saved, or he that is holy shall be justified; all that is needful in order to such promises being true, is, that it be really so, that he that obeys shall be saved, and that holiness and justification shall indeed go together. That proposition may be a truth, that he that obeys shall be saved; because obedience and salvation are connected together in fact; and yet an acceptance

to a title to salvation not be granted upon the account of any of our own virtue or obedience. What is a promise, but only a declaration of future truth, for the comfort and encouragement of the person to whom it is declared? Promises are conditional propositions; and, as has been already observed, it is not the thing in dispute, whether other things besides faith may not have the place of the condition in such propositions wherein pardon and salvation are the consequent.

2. Promises may rationally be made to signs and evidences of faith, and yet the thing promised not be upon the account of the sign, but the thing signified. Thus, for instance, human government may rationally make promises of such and such privileges to those that can show such evidences of their being free of such a city, or members of such a corporation, or descended of such a family; when it is not at all for the sake of that which is the evidence or sign, in itself considered, that they are admitted to such a privilege, but only and purely for the sake of that which it is an evidence of.

And though God does not stand in need of signs to know whether we have true faith or not, yet our own consciences do; so that it is much for our comfort that promises are made to signs of faith. A finding in ourselves a forgiving temper and disposition, may be a most proper and natural evidence to our consciences, that our hearts have, in a sense of our own utter unworthiness, truly closed and fallen in with the way of free and infinitely gracious forgiveness of our sins by Jesus Christ; whence we may be enabled, with the greater comfort, to apply to ourselves the promises of forgiveness by Christ.

3. It has been just now shown, how that acts of evangelical obedience are indeed concerned in our justification itself, and are not excluded from that condition that justification depends upon, without the least prejudice to that doctrine of justification by faith, without any goodness of our own, that has been maintained; and therefore it can be no objection against this doctrine, that we have sometimes in Scripture promises of pardon and acceptance made to such acts of obedience.

4. Promises of particular benefits implied in justification and salvation, may especially be fitly made to such expressions and evidences of faith as they have a peculiar natural likeness and suitableness to. As forgiveness is promised to a forgiving spirit in us; obtaining mercy is fitly promised to mercifulness in us; and the like: and that upon several accounts; they are the most natural evidences of our heart's closing with those benefits by faith; for they do especially show the sweet accord and consent that there is between the heart and these benefits; and by reason of the natural likeness that there is between the virtue and the benefit, the one has the greater tendency to bring the other to mind; the practise of the virtue tends the more to renew the sense, and refresh the hope of the blessing promised: and also to convince the conscience of the justice of being denied the benefit, if the duty be neglected.

And besides the sense and manifestation of divine forgiveness in our own consciences; yea, and many exercises of God's forgiving mercy, as it respects God's fatherly displeasure, that are granted after justification, through the course of a Christian's life, may be given as the proper rewards of the virtue of a forgiving spirit, and yet this not be at all to the prejudice of the doctrine we have maintained; as will more fully appear, when we come to answer another objection hereafter to be mentioned.

Object. 2. Our own obedience and inherent holiness, is necessary to prepare men for heaven; and therefore is doubtless what recommends persons to God' acceptance, as the heirs of heaven.

To this I answer,

1. Our own obedience being necessary in order to a preparation for an actual bestowment of glory, is no argument that it is the thing upon the account of which we are accepted to a right to it. God may, and does do many things to prepare the saints for glory, after he has accepted them as the heirs of glory. A parent may do much in its education, to prepare a child for an inheritance after the child is an heir; yea, there are many things necessary to fit a child for the actual possession of the inheritance, that be not necessary in order to its having a right to the inheritance.

2. If every thing that is necessary to prepare men for glory must be the proper condition of justification, then perfect holiness is the condition of justification. Men must be made perfectly holy, before they are admitted to the enjoyment of the blessedness of heaven; for there must in no wise enter in there any spiritual defilement. And therefore, when a saint dies he leaves all his sin and corruption when he leaves the body.

Object. 3. Our obedience is not only indissolubly connected with salvation, and preparatory to it, but the Scripture expressly speaks of bestowing eternal blessings as rewards for the good deeds of the saints. Matt. x. 42, "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, he shall in no wise lose his reward." 1 Cor. iii. 8, "Every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labor." And in many other places. This seems to militate against the doctrine that has been maintained, two ways: 1. The bestowing a reward, carries in it a respect to a moral fitness, in the thing rewarded, to the reward; the very notion of a reward being a benefit bestowed in testimony of acceptance of, and respect to, the goodness or amiableness of some qualification or work in the person rewarded. And besides, the Scripture seems to explain itself in this matter, in Rev. iii. 4: "Thou hast a few names, even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments: and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy." This is here given as the reason why they should have such a reward, "because they were worthy;" which, though we suppose it to imply no proper merit, yet it at least implies a moral fitness, or that the excellency of their virtue in God's sight recommends them to such a reward; which seems directly repugnant to what has been supposed, viz., that we are accepted, and approved of God, as the heirs of salvation, not out of regard to the excellency of our own virtue or goodness, or any moral fitness therein to such a reward, but on the account of the dignity and moral fitness of Christ's righteousness. 2. Our being eternally rewarded for our own holiness and good works, necessarily supposes that our future happiness will be greater or smaller, in some proportion as our own holiness and obedience are more or less; and that there are different degrees of glory, according to different degrees of virtue and good works, is a doctrine very expressly and frequently taught us in Scripture. But this seems quite inconsistent with the saints' all having their future blessedness as a reward of Christ's righteousness: for if Christ's righteousness be imputed to all, and this be what entitles each one to glory, then it is the same righteousness that entitles one to glory which entitles another. But if all have glory as the reward of the same righteousness, why have not all the same glory? Does not the same righteousness merit as much glory when imputed to one as when imputed to another?

In answer to the *first* part of this objection, I would observe, that it does not argue that we are justified by our good deeds, that we shall have eternal blessings in reward for them, for it is in consequence of our justification, that our good deeds become rewardable with spiritual and eternal rewards. The accept-

ableness, and so the rewardableness of our virtue, is not antecedent to justification, but follows it, and is built entirely upon it; which is the reverse of what those in the adverse scheme of justification suppose, viz., that justification is built on the acceptableness and rewardableness of our virtue. They suppose that a saving interest in Christ is given as a reward of our virtue, or (which is the same thing) as a testimony of God's acceptance of our excellency in our virtue. But the contrary is true, that God's respect to our virtue as our amiableness in his sight, and his acceptance of it as rewardable, are entirely built on our interest in Christ already established. So that that relation to Christ, whereby believers, in Scripture language, are said to be in Christ, is the very foundation of our virtues and good deeds being accepted of God, and so of their being rewarded; for a reward is a testimony of acceptance. For we, and all that we do, are accepted only in the beloved, Eph. i. 6. Our sacrifices are acceptable, only through our interest in him, and through his worthiness and preciousness being, as it were, made ours. 1 Pet. ii. 4, 5, "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." Here a being actually built on this stone, precious to God, is mentioned as all the ground of the acceptableness of our good works to God, and their becoming also precious in his eyes. So, Heb. xiii. 21, "Make you perfect in every good word to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ." And hence we are directed, whatever we offer to God, to offer it in Christ's name, as expecting to have it accepted no other way, than from the value that God has to that name. Col. iii. 17, "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." To act in Christ's name, is to act under him, as our head, and as having him to stand for us, and represent us Godward.

The reason of this may be seen, from what has been already said, to show that it is not meet that any thing in us should be accepted of God as any excellency of our persons, until we are actually in Christ, and justified through him. The loveliness of the virtue of the fallen creatures is nothing in the sight of God, till he beholds them in Christ, and clothed with his righteousness. 1, Because till then we stand condemned before God, by his own holy law, to his utter rejection and abhorrence. And, 2, Because we are infinitely guilty before him; and the loveliness of our virtue bears no proportion to our guilt, and must therefore pass for nothing before a strict judge. And, 3, Because our good deeds and virtuous acts themselves are in a sense corrupt; and the hatefulness of the corruption of them, if we are beheld as we are in ourselves, or separate from Christ, infinitely outweighs the loveliness of that which attends the act of virtue itself, the loveliness vanishes into nothing in comparison of it: and therefore the virtue must pass for nothing, out of Christ. Not only are our best duties defiled, in being attended with the exercises of sin and corruption, that precede them, and follow them, and are intermingled with holy acts; but even the holy acts themselves, and the gracious exercises of the godly, though the act most simply considered is good, yet take the acts in their measure and dimensions, and the manner in which they are exerted, and they are corrupt acts; that is, they are defectively corrupt, or sinfully defective; there is that defect in them that may well be called the corruption of them. That defect is properly sin, an expression of a vile sinfulness of heart, and what tends to provoke the just anger of God; not because the exercise of love and other grace is not equal to God's loveliness; for it is impossible the love of creatures (men

or angels) should be so; but because the act is so very disproportionate to the occasion given for love or other grace, considering God's loveliness, and the manifestation that is made of it, and the exercises of kindness, and the capacity of human nature, and our advantages (and the like) together. A negative expression of corruption may be as truly sin, and as just cause of provocation, as a positive. Thus if a man, a worthy and excellent person, should, from mere generosity and goodness, exceedingly lay out himself, and should, with great expense and suffering, save another's life, or redeem him from some extreme calamity; and when he had done all, that other person should never thank him for it, or express the least gratitude any way; this would be a negative expression of his ingratitude, and baseness; but is equivalent to an act of ingratitude or positive exercise of a base unworthy spirit; and is truly an expression of it, and brings as much blame, as if he, by some positive act, had much injured another person. And so it would be (only in a less degree), if the gratitude was but very small, bearing no proportion to the benefit and obligation; as if, for so great and extraordinary a kindness, he should express no more gratitude than would have been becoming towards a person that had only given him a cup of water when thirsty, or shown him the way in a journey when at a loss, or had done him some such small kindness: if he should come to his benefactor to express his gratitude, and should do after this manner, he might truly be said to act unworthily and odiously; he would show a most ungrateful spirit: and his doing after such a manner might justly be abhorred by all: and yet the gratitude, what little there is of it, most simply considered, and so far as it goes, is good. And so it is with respect to our exercise of love, and gratitude, and other graces, towards God: they are defectively corrupt and sinful, and take them as they are, in their manner and measure, might justly be odious and provoking to God, and would necessarily be so, were we beheld out of Christ: for in that this defect is sin, it is infinitely hateful; and so the hatefulness of the very act infinitely outweighs the loveliness of it; because all sin has infinite hatefulness and heinousness; but our holiness has but little value and loveliness, as has been elsewhere demonstrated.

Hence, though it be true that the saints are rewarded for their good works, yet it is for Christ's sake only, and not for the excellency of their works in themselves considered, or beheld separately from Christ; for so they have no excellency in God's sight, or acceptableness to him, as has now been shown. It is acknowledged that God, in rewarding the holiness and good works of believers, does in some respect give them happiness, as a testimony of his respect to the loveliness of their holiness and good works in his sight; for that is the very notion of a reward: but in a very different sense from what would have been, if man had not fallen; which would have been to bestow eternal life on man, as a testimony of God's respect to the loveliness of what man did, considered as in itself, and as in man, separately by himself, and not beheld as a member of Christ: in which sense also, the scheme of justification we are opposing necessarily supposes the excellency of our virtue to be respected and rewarded; for it supposes a saving interest in Christ itself to be given as a reward of it.

Two things come to pass, relating to the saints' reward of their inherent righteousness, by virtue of their relation to Christ. 1. The guilt of their persons is all done away, and the pollution and hatefulness that attend their good works are hid. 2. Their relation to Christ adds a positive value and dignity to their good works in God's sight. That little holiness, and those faint and feeble acts of love, and other grace, receive an exceeding value in the sight of God, by

virtue of God's beholding them as in Christ, and as it were members of one so infinitely worthy in his eyes; and that because God looks upon their persons as persons of greater dignity on this account, Isa. xliii. 4: "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honorable." God for Christ's sake, and because they are members of his own righteous and dear Son, sets an exceeding value upon their persons; and hence it follows, that he also sets a great value upon their good acts and offerings. The same love and obedience in a person of greater dignity and value in God's sight is more valuable in his eyes than in one of less dignity. Love and respect (as has been before observed) are valuable in proportion to the dignity of the person whose love it is; because, so far as any one gives his love to another, he gives himself, in that he gives his heart: but this is a more excellent offering, in proportion as the person whose self is offered is more worthy. Believers are become immensely more honorable in God's esteem by virtue of their relation to Christ, than man would have been, considered as by himself, though he had been free from sin; as a mean person becomes more honorable when married to a king. Hence God will probably reward the little, weak love, and poor and exceedingly imperfect obedience of believers in Christ, with a more glorious reward than he would have done Adam's perfect obedience. According to the tenor of the first covenant, the person was to be accepted and rewarded, only for the work's sake; but by the covenant of grace, the work is accepted and rewarded, only for the person's sake; the person being beheld antecedently as a member of Christ, and clothed with his righteousness. So that though the saints' inherent holiness is rewarded, yet this very reward is indeed not the less founded on the worthiness and righteousness of Christ: none of the value that their works have in his sight, nor any of the acceptance they have with him, is out of Christ, and out of his righteousness; but his worthiness as Mediator is the prime and only foundation on which all is built, and the universal source whence all arises. God indeed doth great things out of regard to the saints' loveliness, but it is only as a secondary and derivative loveliness, as it were. When I speak of a derivative loveliness, I do not mean only, that the qualifications themselves that are accepted as lovely, are derived from Christ, and are from his power and purchase; but that the acceptance of them as a loveliness, and all the value that is set upon them, and all their connection with the reward, is founded in, and derived from Christ's righteousness and worthiness.

If we suppose that not only higher degrees of glory in heaven, but heaven itself, is in some respect given in reward for the holiness and good works of the saints, in this secondary and derivative sense, it will not prejudice the doctrine we have maintained. It is no way impossible that God may bestow heaven's glory wholly out of respect to Christ's righteousness, and yet in reward for man's inherent holiness, in different respects, and different ways. It may be only Christ's righteousness that God has respect to, for his own sake, the independent acceptableness and dignity of it, being sufficient of itself to recommend all that believe in Christ to a title to this glory; and so it may be only by this, that persons enter into a title to heaven, or have their prime right to it: and yet God may also have respect to the saints' own holiness, for Christ's sake, and as deriving a value from Christ's merit, which he may testify in bestowing heaven upon them. The saints being beheld as members of Christ, their obedience is looked upon by God as something of Christ's, it being the obedience of the members of Christ, and their sufferings are looked upon, in some respect, as the sufferings of Christ. Hence the apostle, speaking of his sufferings, says, Col. i 24, "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is be-

hind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh." To the same purpose is Matt xxv. 35, &c., I was an hungered, naked, sick, and in prison, &c. And so that in Rev. xi. 8, "And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified."

By the merit and righteousness of Christ, such favor of God towards believers may be obtained, as that God may hereby be already, as it were, disposed to make them perfectly and eternally happy. But yet this does not hinder, but that God in his wisdom may choose to bestow this perfect and eternal happiness in this way, viz., in some respect as a reward of their holiness and obedience: it is not impossible but that the blessedness may be bestowed as a reward for that which is done, after that an interest is already obtained in that favor which (to speak of God after the manner of men) disposes God to bestow the blessedness. Our heavenly Father may already have that favor for a child, whereby he may be thoroughly ready to give the child an inheritance, because he is his child; which he is by the purchase of Christ's righteousness: and yet that does not hinder but that it should be possible, that the Father may choose to bestow the inheritance on the child, in a way of reward for his dutifulness, and behaving as becoming a child. And so great and exceeding a reward may not be judged more than a meet reward for his dutifulness; but that so great a reward is judged meet, does not arise from the excellency of the obedience absolutely considered, but from his standing in so near and honorable a relation to God, as that of a child, which is obtained only by the righteousness of Christ. And thus the reward arises properly from the righteousness of Christ; though it be indeed in some sort the reward of their obedience. As a father might justly esteem the inheritance no more than a meet reward for the obedience of his child, and yet esteem it more than a meet reward for the obedience of a servant. The favor whence a believer's heavenly Father bestows the eternal inheritance, and his title as an heir, is founded in that relation he stands in to him as a child, purchased by Christ's righteousness; though he in wisdom chooses to bestow it in such a way, as therein to testify his acceptance of the amiableness of his own obedience in Christ.

Believers having a title to heaven by faith, antecedent to their obedience, or its being absolutely promised to them before, does not hinder but that the actual bestowment of heaven may also be a testimony of God's regard to their obedience, though performed afterwards. Thus it was with Abraham, the father and pattern of all believers: God bestowed upon him that blessing of multiplying his seed as the stars of heaven, and causing that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed, in reward for his obedience in offering up his son Isaac: Gen. xxii. 16—18, "And said, by myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son; that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice." And yet the very same blessings had been from time to time promised to Abraham, in the most positive terms, and the promise, with great solemnity, confirmed and sealed to him; as chap. xii. 2, 3, chap. xiii. 16, chap. xv. 1—7, &c., chap xvii. throughout, chap. xviii. 10, 18.

From what has been said we may easily solve the difficulty arising from that text in Rev. iii. 4, "They shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy;" which is parallel with that text in Luke xx. 35, "But they which shall be ac-

counted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead." I allow (as in the objection) that this worthiness does doubtless denote a moral fitness to the reward, or that God looks on these glorious benefits as a meet testimony of his regard to the value which their persons and performances have in his sight.

1. God looks on these glorious benefits as a meet testimony of his regard to the value which their persons have in his sight. But he sets this value upon their persons purely for Christ's sake: they are such jewels, and have such preciousness in his eyes, only because they are beheld in Christ, and by reason of the worthiness of the head they are the members of, and the stock they are grafted into. And this value that God sets upon them on this account is so great, that God thinks meet, from regard to it, to admit them to such exceeding glory The saints, on the account of their relation to Christ, are such precious jewels in God's sight, that they are thought worthy of a place in his own crown. Mal. iii. 17, Zech. iv. 16. So far as the saints are said to be valuable in God's sight, upon whatever account they are so, so far may they properly be said to be worthy, or meet for that honor that is answerable to that value or price which God sets upon them. A child or wife of a prince is worthy to be treated with great honor; and therefore if a mean person should be adopted to be a child of a prince, or should be espoused to a prince, it would be proper to say, that she was worthy of such an honor and respect, and there would be no force upon the words in saying that she ought to have such respect paid her, for she is worthy, though it be only on the account of her relation to the prince that she is so

2. From the value God sets upon their persons, for the sake of Christ's worthiness, he also sets a high value on their virtue and performances. Their meek and quiet spirit is of great price in his sight. Their fruits are pleasant fruits, their offerings are an odor of sweet smell to him; and that because of the value he sets on their persons, as has been already observed and explained. This preciousness or high valuableness of believers is a moral fitness to a reward; and yet this valuableness is all in the righteousness of Christ, that is the foundation of it. The thing that respect is had to, is not the excellency that is in them separately by themselves, or in their virtue by itself, but to the value that in God's account arises thereto on other considerations; which is the natural import of the manner of expression in Luke xx. 35, "They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world," &c.; and Luke xxi. 36, "That ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man." 2 Thess. i. 5, "That ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer."

There is a vast difference between this scheme, and what is supposed in the scheme of those that oppose the doctrine of justification by faith alone. This lays the foundation of first acceptance with God, and all actual salvation consequent upon it, wholly in Christ and his righteousness. On the contrary, in their scheme a regard to man's own excellency or virtue is supposed to be first, and to have the place of the first foundation in actual salvation, though not in that ineffectual redemption, which they suppose common to all: they lay the foundation of all discriminating salvation in man's own virtue and moral excellency: this is the very bottom stone in this affair; for they suppose that it is from regard to our virtue, that a special interest in Christ itself is given. The foundation being thus contrary, the whole scheme becomes exceeding diverse and contrary; the one scheme is an evangelical one, the other a legal one; the one is utterly inconsistent with our being justified by Christ's righteousness, the other not at all.

From what has been said, we may understand what has been before mentioned, viz., how that not only is that forgiveness of sin that is granted in justification indissolubly connected with a forgiving spirit in us, but there may be many exercises of forgiving mercy that may properly be granted in reward for our forgiving those that trespass against us: for none will deny but that there are many acts of divine forgiveness towards the saints, that do not presuppose an unjustified state immediately preceding that forgiveness. None will deny, that saints that never fell from grace or a justified state, do yet commit many sins which God forgives afterwards, by laying aside his fatherly displeasure. This forgiveness may be in reward for our forgiveness, without any prejudice to the doctrine that has been maintained, as well as other mercies and blessings consequent on justification.

With respect to the *second* part of the objection, that relates to the different degrees of glory, and the seeming inconsistence there is in it, that the degrees of glory in different saints should be greater or less according to their inherent holiness and good works, and yet, that every one's glory should be purchased with the price of the very same imputed righteousness:

I answer, that Christ, by his righteousness, purchased for every one complete and perfect happiness, according to his capacity. But this does not hinder but that the saints, being of various capacities, may have various degrees of happiness, and yet all their happiness be the fruit of Christ's purchase. Indeed it cannot be properly said that Christ purchased any particular degree of happiness, so that the value of Christ's righteousness in the sight of God, is sufficient to raise a believer so high in happiness, and no higher, and so that if the believer were made happier, it would exceed the value of Christ's righteousness; but in general, Christ purchased eternal life or perfect happiness for all, according to their several capacities. The saints are as so many vessels of different sizes, cast into a sea of happiness, where every vessel is full; this Christ purchased for all: yet it is left to God's sovereign pleasure to determine the largeness of the vessel; Christ's righteousness meddles not with this matter. Eph. iv. 4—7, "There is one body, and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism," &c. "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." God may dispense in this matter according to what rule he pleases, not the less for what Christ has done: he may dispense either without condition, or upon what condition he pleases to fix. It is evident that Christ's righteousness meddles not with this matter; for what Christ did was to fulfil the covenant of works; but the covenant of works did not meddle at all with this: if Adam had persevered in perfect obedience, he and his posterity would have had perfect and full happiness; every one's happiness would have so answered his capacity, that he would have been completely blessed; but God would have been at liberty to have made some of one capacity, and others of another, as he pleased. The angels have obtained eternal life, or a state of confirmed glory, by a covenant of works, whose condition was perfect obedience; but yet some are higher in glory than others, according to the several capacities that God, according to his sovereign pleasure, hath given them. So that it being still left with God, notwithstanding the perfect obedience of the second Adam, to fix the degree of each one's capacity by what rule he pleases, he hath been pleased to fix the degree of capacity, and so of glory, by the proportion of the saints' grace and fruitfulness here: he gives higher degrees of glory, in reward for higher degrees of holiness and good works, because it pleases him; and yet all the happiness of each saint is indeed the fruit of the purchase of Christ's obedience. It

it had been but one man that Christ had obeyed and died for, and it had pleased God to make him of a very large capacity, Christ's perfect obedience would have purchased that his capacity should be filled, and then all his happiness might properly be said to be the fruit of Christ's perfect obedience; though if he had been of a less capacity, he would not have had so much happiness by the same obedience; and yet would have had as much as Christ merited for him. Christ's righteousness meddles not with the degree of happiness, any otherwise than as he merits that it should be full and perfect, according to the capacity; and so it may be said to be concerned in the degree of happiness, as perfect is a degree with respect to imperfect; but it meddles not with degrees of perfect happiness.

This matter may be yet better understood, if we consider that Christ and the whole church of saints are, as it were, one body, of which he is the Head, and they members, of different place and capacity: now the whole body, head and members, have communion in Christ's righteousness; they are all partakers of the benefit of it; Christ himself the head is rewarded for it, and every member is partaker of the benefit and reward: but it does by no means follow, that every part should equally partake of the benefit, but every part in proportion to its place and capacity; the head partakes of far more than other parts, because it is of a far greater capacity; and the more noble members partake of more than the inferior. As it is in a natural body that enjoys perfect health, the head, and the heart, and lungs, have a greater share of this health, they have it more seated in them, than the hands and feet, because they are parts of greater capacity; though the hands and feet are as much in perfect health as those nobler parts of the body: so it is in the mystical body of Christ, all the members are partakers of the benefit of the righteousness of the head; but it is according to the different capacity and place they have in the body; and God determines that place and capacity as he pleases; he makes whom he pleases the foot, and whom he pleases the hand, and whom he pleases the lungs, &c.: 1 Cor. xii. 18. "God hath set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him." And God efficaciously determines the place and capacity of every member, by the different degrees of grace and assistance in the improvement of it here in this world: those that he intends for the highest place in the body, he gives them most of his Spirit, the greatest share of the divine nature, the Spirit and nature of Christ Jesus the head, and that assistance whereby they perform the most excellent works, and do most abound in them.

Object. 4. It may be objected against what has been supposed, viz., that rewards are given to our good works, only in consequence of an interest in Christ, or in testimony of God's respect to the excellency or value of them in his sight, as built on an interest in Christ's righteousness already obtained: that the Scripture speaks of an interest in Christ itself, as being given out of respect to our moral fitness, Matt. x. 37—39, "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me: he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me: he that taketh not up his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life, shall lose it," &c. Worthiness here, at least signifies a moral fitness, or an excellency or virtue that recommends: and this place seems to intimate as though it were from respect to a moral fitness that men are admitted even to a union with Christ, and interest in him; and therefore this worthiness cannot be consequent on being in Christ, and by the imputation of his worthiness, or from any value that is in us, or in our actions in God's sight, as beheld in Christ.

To this I answer, that though persons when they are accepted, are not ac-

cepted as worthy, yet when they are rejected they are rejected as unworthy. He that does not love Christ above other things, that treats him with such indignity, as to set him below earthly things, shall be treated as unworthy of Christ; his unworthiness of Christ, especially in that particular, shall be marked against him, and imputed to him: and though he be a professing Christian, and live in the enjoyment of the gospel, and has been visibly ingrafted into Christ, and admitted as one of his disciples, as Judas was; yet he shall be thrust out in wrath, as a punishment of his vile treatment of Christ. The forementioned words do not imply, that if a man does love Christ above father and mother, &c, that he should be worthy; the most they imply is, that such a visible Christian shall be treated and thrust out as unworthy. He that believes is not received for the worthiness or moral fitness of faith; but yet the visible Christian is cast out by God, for the unworthiness and moral unfitness of unbelief. A being accepted as one of Christ's, is not the reward of believing; but being thrust out from being one of Christ's disciples, after a visible admission as such, is properly punishment of unbelief: John iii. 18, 19, "He that believeth on him, is not condemned; but he that believeth not, is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." Salvation is promised to faith as a free gift, but damnation is threatened to unbelief as a debt, or punishment due to unbelief. They that believed in the wilderness did not enter into Canaan, because of the worthiness of their faith; but God sware in his wrath, that they that believed not should not enter in, because of the unworthiness of their unbelief. The admitting a soul to a union with Christ is an act of free and sovereign grace; but an excluding at death, and at the day of judgment, those professors of Christianity that have had the offers of a Saviour and enjoyed great privileges as God's people, is a judicial proceeding, and a just punishment of their unworthy treatment of Christ. The design of this saying of Christ is to make men sensible of the unworthiness of their treatment of Christ, that professed him to be their Lord and Saviour, and set him below father and mother, &c., and not to persuade of the worthiness of loving him above father and mother. If a beggar should be offered any great and precious gift, but as soon as offered, should trample it under his feet, it might be taken from him, as unworthy to have it: or if a malefactor should have his pardon offered him, that he might be freed from execution, and should only scoff at it, his pardon might be refused him, as unworthy of it; though if he had received it, he would not have had it for his worthiness, or as being recommended to it by his virtue; for his being a malefactor supposes him unworthy, and its being offered him to have it only on accepting, supposes that the king looks for no worthiness, nothing in him for which he should bestow pardon as a reward. This may teach us how to understand Acts xiii. 46: "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken unto you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."

Object. 5. It is objected against the doctrine of justification by faith alone, that repentance is evidently spoken of in Scripture as that which is in a special manner the condition of remission of sins: but remission of sins is by all allowed to be that wherein justification does (at least) in great part consist.

But it must certainly arise from a misunderstanding of what the Scripture says about repentance, to suppose that faith and repentance are two distinct things, that in like manner are the conditions of justification. For it is most plain from the Scripture, that the condition of justification, or that in us by

which we are justified, is but one, and that is faith. Faith and repentance are not two distinct conditions of justification, nor are they two distinct things that together make one condition of justification; but faith comprehends the whole of that by which we are justified, or by which we come to have an interest in Christ, and nothing else has a parallel concern with it in the affair of our salvation. And this the divines on the other side themselves are sensible of, and therefore they suppose that that faith that the Apostle Paul speaks of, which he says we are justified by alone, comprehends in it repentance.

And therefore, in answer to the objection, I would say, that when repentance is spoken of in Scripture as the condition of pardon, thereby is not intended any particular grace, or act properly distinct from faith, that has a parallel influence with it in the affair of our pardon or justification; but by repentance is intended nothing distinct from active conversion (or conversion actively considered), as it respects the term from which. Active conversion is a motion or exercise of that mind that respects two terms, viz., sin and God: and by repentance is meant this conversion, or active change of the mind, so far as it is conversant about the term from which, or about sin. This is what the word *repentance* properly signifies; which in the original of the New Testament, is *μετανοια*, which signifies *a change of the mind*, or which is the same thing, the turning or the conversion of the mind. Repentance is this turning, as it respects what is turned from: Acts xxvi. 20, "Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I showed unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, and turn to God." Both these are the same turning, but only with respect to opposite terms: in the former, is expressed the exercise of mind that there is about sin in this turning; in the other, the exercise of mind towards God.

If we look over the Scriptures that speak of evangelical repentance, we shall presently see that repentance is to be understood in this sense; as Matt. ix. 13, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Luke xiii. 3, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." And chap. xv. 7, 10, "There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth," i. e., over one sinner that is converted. Acts xi. 18, "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." This is said by the Christians of the circumcision at Jerusalem, upon Peter's giving an account of the conversion of Cornelius and his family, and their embracing the gospel, though Peter had said nothing expressly about their sorrow for sin. And again, Acts xvii. 30, "But now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." And Luke xvi. 30, "Nay, father Abraham, but if one went to them from the dead they would repent." 2 Pet iii. 9, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." It is plain that in these and other places, by repentance is meant conversion.

Now, it is true, that conversion is the condition of pardon and justification: but if it be so, how absurd is it to say, that conversion is one condition of justification, and faith another, as though they were distributively distinct and parallel conditions! Conversion is the condition of justification, because it is that great change by which we are brought from sin to Christ, and by which we become believers in him, agreeable to Matt. xxi. 32: "And ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him." When we are directed to repent, that our sins may be blotted out, it is as much as to say, let your minds and hearts be changed, that your sins may be blotted out. But if it be said, let your hearts be changed, that you may be justified; and also said,

believe that you may be justified; does it therefore follow, that the heart's being changed is one condition of justification, and believing another? But our minds must be changed, that we may believe, and so may be justified.

And besides, evangelical repentance, being active conversion, is not to be treated of as a particular grace, properly and entirely distinct from faith, as by some it seems to have been. What is conversion, but the sinful, alienated soul's closing with Christ, or the sinner's being brought to believe in Christ? That exercise of soul that there is in conversion, that respects sin, cannot be excluded out of the nature of faith in Christ: there is something in faith, or closing with Christ that respects sin, and that is evangelical repentance. That repentance which in Scripture is called repentance for the remission of sins, is that very principle or operation of the mind itself that is called faith, so far as it is conversant about sin. Justifying faith in a Mediator is conversant about two things: it is conversant about sin or evil to be rejected and to be delivered from by the Mediator, and about positive good to be accepted and obtained by the Mediator; as conversant about the former of these it is evangelical repentance, or repentance for remission of sins. Surely they must be very ignorant, or at least very inconsiderate of the whole tenor of the gospel, that think that that repentance by which remission of sins is obtained, can be completed, as to all that is essential to it, without any respect to Christ, or application of the mind to the Mediator, who alone has made atonement for sin. Surely so great a part of salvation as remission of sins, is not to be obtained without looking or coming to the great and only Saviour. It is true, repentance, in its more general, abstracted nature, is only a sorrow for sin and forsaking of it, which is a duty of natural religion; but evangelical repentance, or repentance for remission of sins, hath more than this essential to it; a dependence of soul on the Mediator for deliverance from sin, is of the essence of it.

That justifying repentance has the nature of faith, seems evident by Acts xix. 4: "Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." The latter words, "saying unto the people, that they should believe on him," &c., are evidently exegetical of the former, and explain how he preached repentance for the remission of sin. When it is said, that he preached repentance for the remission of sin, saying, that they should believe on Christ, cannot be supposed but that it is intended this saying, that they should believe in Christ, was as directing them what to do that they might obtain the remission of sins. So, 2 Tim. ii. 25, "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." That acknowledging of the truth which there is in believing, is here spoken of as what is attained in repentance. And on the other hand, that faith includes repentance in its nature, is evident by the apostle's speaking of sin as destroyed in faith, Gal. ii. 17. In the preceding verses the apostle mentions an objection against the doctrine of justification by faith alone, viz., that it tends to encourage men in sin, and so to make Christ the minister of sin. This objection he rejects and refutes with this, "If I build again the things that I had destroyed, I make myself a transgressor." If sin be destroyed by faith, it must be by repentance of sin included in it; for we know that it is our repentance of sin, or the μεταυοια or turning of the mind from sin, that is our destroying our sin.

That in justifying faith that directly respects sin, or the evil to be delivered from by the Mediator, is as follows: a sense of our own sinfulness, and the hatefulness of it, and a hearty acknowledgment of its desert of the threatened pun-

ishment, looking to the free mercy of God in a Redeemer, for deliverance from it and its punishment.

Concerning this here described, three things may be noted. 1. That it is the very same with that evangelical repentance to which remission of sins is promised in Scripture. 2. That it is all of it of the essence of justifying faith, and is the same with that faith, so far as it is conversant about the evil to be delivered from by the Mediator. 3. That this is indeed the proper and peculiar condition of remission of sins.

1. All of it is essential to evangelical repentance, and is indeed the very thing meant by that repentance, to which remission of sins is promised in the gospel. As to the former part of the description, viz., a sense of our own sinfulness, and the hatefulness of it, and a hearty acknowledgment of its desert of wrath, none will deny it to be included in repentance: but this does not comprehend the whole essence of evangelical repentance; but what follows does also properly and essentially belong to its nature, looking to the free mercy of God in a Redeemer, for deliverance from it, and from the punishment of it. That repentance to which remission is promised, not only always has this with it, but it is contained in it, as what is of the proper nature and essence of it, and respect is ever had to this in the nature of repentance, whenever remission is promised to it; and it is especially from respect to this in the nature of repentance, that it has that promise made to it. If this latter part be missing, it fails of the nature of that evangelical repentance to which remission of sins is promised. If repentance remains in sorrow for sin, and does not reach to a looking to the free mercy of God in Christ for pardon, it is not that which is the condition of pardon, neither shall pardon be obtained by it. Evangelical repentance is a humiliation for sin before God; but the sinner never comes and humbles himself before God in any other repentance, but that which includes a hoping in his mercy for remission: if his sorrow be not accompanied with that, there will be no coming to God in it, but a flying further from him. There is some worship of God in justifying repentance; but that there is not in any other repentance, but that which has a sense of and faith in the divine mercy to forgive sin: Psalm cxxx. 4, "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared." The promise of mercy to a true penitent, in Prov. xxviii. 13, is expressed in these terms: "Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins, shall have mercy." But there is faith in God's mercy in that confessing. The Psalmist, in Psalm xxxii., speaking of the blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered, to whom the Lord imputes not sin, says, that he acknowledged his sin unto God, his iniquity he did not hide; he said he would confess his transgression to the Lord, and then God forgave the iniquity of his sin. The manner of expression plainly holds forth, that then while he kept silence his bones waxed old, but then he began to encourage himself in the mercy of God, when before his bones waxed old, while he kept silence; and therefore the Apostle Paul, in the 4th of Romans, brings this instance to confirm the doctrine of justification by faith alone that he had been insisting on. When sin is aright confessed to God, there is always faith in that act: that confessing of sin that is joined with despair such as was in Judas, is not the confession to which the promise is made. In Acts ii. 38, the direction that was given to those that were pricked in their heart with a sense of the guilt of sin, was to repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of their sins. A being baptized in the name of Christ for the remission of sins, implied faith in Christ for the remission of sins. Repentance for the remission of sins was typified of old by the priest's confessing

the sins of the people over the scape goat, laying his hands on him, Lev. xvi. 21, denoting that it is that repentance and confession of sin only that obtains remission, that is made over the scape goat, over Christ, the great sacrifice, and with dependence on him. Many other things might be produced from the Scripture, that do in like manner confirm this point; but these may be sufficient.

2. All the forementioned description is of the essence of justifying faith, and not different from it, so far as it is conversant about sin, or the evil to be delivered from by the Mediator. For it is doubtless of the essence of justifying faith, to embrace Christ as a Saviour from sin and its punishment; and all that is contained in that act is contained in the nature of faith itself: but in the act of embracing Christ as a Saviour from our sin and its punishment, is implied a sense of our sinfulness, and a hatred of our sins, or a rejecting them with abhorrence, and a sense of our desert of their punishment. An embracing Christ as a Saviour from sin, implies the contrary act towards sin, viz., rejecting of sin. If we fly to the light to be delivered from darkness, the same is contrary towards darkness, viz., a rejecting of it. In proportion to the earnestness or appetite with which we embrace Christ as a Saviour from sin, in the same proportion is the abhorrence with which we reject sin, in the same act. Yea, if we suppose there to be in the nature of faith as conversant about sin, no more than the hearty embracing Christ as a Saviour from the punishment of sin, this act will imply in it the whole of the abovementioned description. It implies a sense of our own sinfulness. Certainly in the hearty embracing a Saviour from the punishment of our sinfulness, there is the exercise of a sense of our sinfulness, or that we be sinful: we cannot heartily embrace Christ as a Saviour from the punishment of that which we are not sensible we are guilty of. There is also in the same act, a sense of our desert of the threatened punishment: we cannot heartily embrace Christ as a Saviour from that which we be not sensible that we have deserved: for if we are not sensible that we have deserved the punishment, we shall not be sensible that we have any need of a Saviour from it, or, at least shall not be convinced but that the God that offers the Saviour, unjustly makes him needful; and we cannot heartily embrace such an offer. And further, there is implied in a hearty embracing Christ as a Saviour from punishment, not only a conviction of conscience that we have deserved the punishment, such as the devils and damned have; but there is a hearty acknowledgment of it, with the submission of the soul, so as with the accord of the heart, to own that God might be just and worthy in the punishment. If the heart rises against the act or judgment of God, in holding us obliged to the punishment, when he offers us his Son as a Saviour from the punishment, we cannot with the consent of the heart receive him in that character: but if persons thus submit to the righteousness of so dreadful a punishment of sin, this carries in it a hatred of sin.

That such a sense of our sinfulness, and utter unworthiness, and desert of punishment, belongs to the nature of saving faith, is what the Scripture from time to time seems to hold forth, as particularly in Matt. xv. 26—28: "But he answered and said, it is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. Then Jesus answered, and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith." And Luke vii. 6—9, "The centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself, for I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof. Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee; but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed: for I also am a man set under authority, &c.—When Jesus heard these things, he mar-

velled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." And also ver. 37, 38, "And behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet, with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment." Together with verse 50, "He said unto the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

These things do not necessarily suppose that repentance and faith are words of just the same signification; for it is only so much in justifying faith as respects the evil to be delivered from by the Saviour, that is called repentance: and besides, both repentance and faith, take them only in their general nature, and they are entirely distinct: repentance is a sorrow for sin, and forsaking of it; and faith is a trusting in God's sufficiency and truth: but faith and repentance, as evangelical duties, or justifying faith, and repentance for remission of sins, contain more in them, and imply a respect to a Mediator, and involve each other's nature;* though it be true, that they still bear the name of faith and repentance, from those general moral virtues, that repentance which is a duty of natural religion, and that faith, that was a duty required under the first covenant, that are contained in the evangelical act; which severally appear when this act is considered with respect to its different terms and object, that it is conversant about.

It may be objected here, that the Scripture sometimes mentions faith and repentance together, as if they were entirely distinct things, as in Mark i. 15: "Repent ye, and believe the gospel." But there is no need of understanding these as two distinct conditions of salvation, but the words are exegetical one of another: it is to teach us after what manner we must repent, viz., as believing the gospel, and after what manner we must believe the gospel, viz., as repenting: these words no more prove faith and repentance to be entirely distinct, than those forementioned. Matt. xxi. 32, "And ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterwards, that ye might believe him." Or those, 2 Tim. ii. 25, "If peradventure God will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." The apostle, in Acts xix. 4, seems to have reference to these words of John the Baptist: "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people that they should believe," &c., where the latter words, as we have already observed, are to explain how he preached repentance.

Another Scripture where faith and repentance are mentioned together, is Acts xx. 21, "Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ." It may be objected that in this place, faith and repentance are not only spoken of as distinct things, but having distinct objects.

To this I answer, that it is true that faith and repentance, in their general nature, are distinct things; and repentance, for the remission of sins, or that in justifying faith that respects the evil to be delivered from, so far as it regards that term, which is what especially denominates it repentance, has respect to God as the object, because he is the being offended by sin, and to be reconciled, but that in this justifying act, whence it is denominated faith, does more especially respect Christ. But let us interpret it how we will, the objection of faith

* Agreeable to this, is what Mr. Locke says in his second Vindication of the Reasonableness of Christianity, &c., Vol. II. of his works, p. 630, 631: "The believing him, therefore, to be the Messiah, is very often, with great reason, put both for faith and repentance too, which are sometimes set down singly, where one is put for both, as implying the other."

being here so distinguished from repentance, is as much for an objection against the scheme of those that oppose justification by faith alone, as against this scheme; for they hold that the justifying faith that the Apostle Paul speaks of, includes repentance, as has been already observed.

3. This repentance that has been described, is indeed the special condition of remission of sin. This seems very evident by the Scripture, as particularly Mark i. 4: "John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance, for the remission of sins." So, Luke iii. 3, "And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance, for the remission of sins." Luke xxiv. 47, "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations." Acts v. 31, "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and Saviour, for to give repentance unto Israel, and forgiveness of sins." Chap. ii. 38, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins." And chap. iii. 19, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." The like is evident by Lev. xxvi. 40—42, Job xxxiii. 27, 28, Psalm xxxii. 5, Prov. xxviii. 13, Jer. iii. 13, and 1 John i. 9, and other places.

And the reason may be plain from what has been said. We need not wonder that that in faith which especially respects sin, should be especially the condition of remission of sins; or that this motion or exercise of the soul, as it rejects and flies from evil, and embraces Christ as a Saviour from it, should especially be the condition of being free from that evil; in like manner, as the same principle or motion, as it seeks good, and cleaves to Christ as the procurer of that good, should be the condition of obtaining that good. Faith with respect to good is accepting, and with respect to evil it is rejecting. Yea, this rejecting evil is itself an act of acceptance; it is accepting freedom or separation from that evil; and this freedom or separation is the benefit bestowed in remission. No wonder that that in faith which immediately respects this benefit, and is our acceptance of this benefit, should be the special condition of our having it: it is so with respect to all the benefits that Christ has purchased. Trusting in God through Christ for such a particular benefit that we need, is the special condition of our having it: it is so with respect to all the benefits that Christ has purchased. Trusting in God through Christ for such a particular benefit that we need is the special condition of obtaining that benefit. When we need protection from enemies, the exercise of faith with respect to such a benefit, or trusting in Christ for protection from enemies, is especially the way to obtain that particular benefit, rather than trusting in Christ for something else; and so of any other benefit that might be mentioned. So prayer (which is the expression of faith) for a particular mercy needed, is especially the way to obtain that mercy.*

So that we see that no argument can be drawn from hence against the doctrine of justification by faith alone. And there is that in the nature of repentance, which particularly tends to establish the contrary of justification by works: for nothing so much renounces our own unworthiness and excellency, as repentance; the very nature of it is to acknowledge our own utter sinfulness and unworthiness, and to renounce our own goodness, and all confidence in self; and so to trust in the propitiation of the Mediator, and ascribe all the glory of forgiveness to him.

Object. 6. The last objection I shall mention, is that paragraph in the 2d

* If repentance justify, or be that by which we obtain pardon of sin any other way than this, it must be either as a virtue or righteousness, or something amiable in us; or else it must be, that our sorrow and condemning what is past, is accepted as some atonement for it; both which are equally contrary to the gospel doctrine of justification by Christ.

chapter of James, where persons are said expressly to be justified by works verse 21, "Was not Abraham our father justified by works?" verse 24, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only;" ver. 25, "Was not Rahab the harlot justified by works?"

In answer to this objection I would,

1. Take notice of the great unfairness of the divines that oppose us, in the improvement they make of this passage against us. All will allow, that in that proposition of St. James, "By works a man is justified, and not by faith only," one of the terms, either the word *faith*, or else the word *justify*, is not to be understood precisely in the same sense as the same terms when used by St. Paul; because they suppose, as well as we, that it was not the intent of the Apostle James to contradict St. Paul in that doctrine of justification by faith alone, that he had instructed the churches in: but if we understand both the terms, as used by each apostle, in precisely the same sense, then what one asserts is a precise, direct, and full contradiction of the other, the one affirming and the other denying the very same thing. So that all the controversy from this text comes to this, viz., which of these two terms shall be understood in a diversity from St. Paul. They say that it is the word *faith;* for they suppose, that when the Apostle Paul uses the word, and makes faith that by which alone we are justified, that then by it is understood a compliance with, and practise of Christianity in general; so as to include all saving Christian virtue and obedience. But as the Apostle James uses the word faith in this place, they suppose thereby is to be understood only an assent of the understanding to the truth of gospel doctrines, as distinguished from good works, and that may exist separate from them, and from all saving grace. We, on the other hand, suppose that the word *justify* is to be understood in a different sense from the Apostle Paul. So that they are forced to go as far in their scheme, in altering the sense of terms from Paul's use of them, as we. But yet at the same time that they freely vary the sense of the former of them, viz., faith, yet when we understand the latter, viz., justify, in a different sense from St. Paul, they cry out of us, what necessity of framing this distinction, but only to serve an opinion! At this rate a man may maintain any thing, though never so contrary to Scripture, and elude the clearest text in the Bible! Though they do not show us why we have not as good warrant to understand the word *justify* in a diversity from St. Paul, as they the word *faith*. If the sense of one of the words must be varied on either scheme, to make the Apostle James's doctrine consistent with the Apostle Paul's, and the varying the sense of one term or the other, be all that stands in the way of their agreeing with either scheme, and the varying the sense of the latter, be in itself as fair as of the former, then the text lies as fair for one scheme as the other, and can no more fairly be an objection against our scheme than theirs And if so, what becomes of all this great objection from this passage in James?

2. If there be no more difficulty in varying the sense of one of these terms than another, from any thing in the text itself, so as to make the words suit with either scheme, then certainly that is to be chosen that is most agreeable to the current of Scripture, and other places where the same matter is more particularly and fully treated of; and therefore that we should understand the word *justify* in this passage of James, in a sense in some respect diverse from that in which St. Paul uses it. For by what has been already said, it may appear, that there is no one doctrine in the whole Bible more fully asserted, explained and urged, than the doctrine of justification by faith alone, without any of our own righteousness.

3. There is a very fair interpretation of this passage of St James, that is no

way inconsistent with this doctrine of justification, which I have shown that other Scriptures do so abundantly teach, which interpretation the words themselves will as well allow of, as that which the objectors put upon them, and much better agrees with the context; and that is, that works are here spoken of as justifying as evidences. A man may be said to be justified by that which clears him, or vindicates him, or makes the goodness of his cause manifest. When a person has a cause tried in a civil court, and is justified or cleared, he may be said in different senses to be cleared, by the goodness of his cause, and by the goodness of the evidences of it. He may be said to be cleared by what evidences his cause to be good. That which renders his cause good, is the proper ground of his justification; it is by that that he is himself a proper subject of it; but evidences justify, only as they manifest that his cause is good in fact, whether they are of such a nature as to have any influence to render it so or no. It is by works that our cause appears to be good; but by faith our cause not only appears to be good, but becomes good; because thereby we are united to Christ. That the word *justify* should be sometimes understood to signify the former of these, as well as the latter, is agreeable to the use of the word in common speech; as we say such a one stood up to justify another, i. e., he endeavored to show or manifest his cause to be good. And it is certain that the word is sometimes used in this sense in Scripture when speaking of our being justified before God; as where it is said, we shall be justified by our words: Matt. xii. 39, "For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." It cannot be meant that men are accepted before God on account of their words; for God has told us nothing more plain, than that it is the heart that he looks at; and that when he acts as judge towards men, in order to justifying or condemning, he tries the heart: Jer. xi. 20, "But O Lord of hosts, that judgest righteously, that triest the reins and the heart, let me see thy vengeance on them; for unto thee have I revealed my cause." Psalm vii. 8, 9, "The Lord shall judge the people: judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity that is in me. O let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish the just; for the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins." Verse 11, "God judgeth the righteous." And many other places to the like purpose. And therefore men can be justified by their words, no otherwise than as evidences or manifestations of what is in the heart. And it is thus that Christ speaks of the words in this very place, as is evident by the context, verses 34, 35, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart," &c. The words, or sounds themselves, are neither parts of godliness, nor evidences of godliness, but as signs of what is inward.

God himself, when he acts towards men as judge, in order to a declarative judgment, makes use of evidences, and so judges men by their works. And therefore, at the day of judgment, God will judge men according to their works: for though God will stand in no need of evidence to inform him what is right, yet it is to be considered, that he will then sit in judgment, not as earthly judges do, to find out what is right in a cause, but to declare and manifest what is right; and therefore that day is called by the apostle, "the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God," Rom. ii. 5.

To be justified, is to be approved and accepted: but a man may be said to be approved and accepted in two respects; the one is to be approved really, and the other to be approved and accepted declaratively. Justification is twofold; it is either the acceptance and approbation of the judge itself, or the manifestation of that approbation, by a sentence or judgment declared by the judge,

either to our own consciences, or to the world. If justification be understood in the former sense, for the approbation itself, that is only that by which we become fit to be approved: but if it be understood in the latter sense, for the manifestation of this approbation, it is by whatever is a proper evidence of that fitness. In the former, faith only is concerned; because it is by that only in us that we become fit to be accepted and approved: in the latter, whatever is an evidence of our fitness, is alike concerned. And therefore, take justification in this sense, and then faith, and all other graces and good works have a common and equal concern in it: for any other grace, or holy act, is equally an evidence of a qualification for acceptance or approbation, as faith. To justify has always, in common speech, signified indifferently, either simply approbation, or testifying that approbation; sometimes one, and sometimes the other: and that because they are both the same, only as one is outwardly what the other is inwardly. So we, and it may be all nations, are wont to give the same names to two things, when one is only declarative of the other. Thus sometimes judging intends only judging in our thoughts; at other times, testifying and declaring judgment. So such words as justify, condemn, accept, reject, prize, slight, approve, renounce, are sometimes put for mental acts, at other times, for an outward treatment. So in the sense in which the Apostle James seems to use the word *justify* for *manifestative justification*, a man is justified not only by faith but also by works; as a tree is manifested to be good, not only by immediately examining the tree, but also by the fruit. Prov. xx. 11, "Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right."

The drift of the apostle does not require that he should be understood in any other sense: for all that he aims at, as appears by a view of the context, is to prove that good works are necessary. The error of those that he opposed was this, that good works were not necessary to salvation; that if they did but believe that there was but one God, and that Christ was the Son of God, and the like, and were baptized, they were safe, let them live how they would; which doctrine greatly tended to licentiousness. The evincing of the contrary of this is evidently the apostle's scope.

And that we should understand the apostle, of works justifying as an evidence, and in a declarative judgment, is what a due consideration of the context will naturally lead us to. For it is plain, that the apostle is here insisting on works, in the quality of a necessary manifestation and evidence of faith, or as what the truth of faith is showed or made to appear by: as verse 18, "Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works." And when he says, verse 26, "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also," it is much more rational and natural to understand him as speaking of works done as proper signs and evidences of the reality, life, and goodness of faith. Not that the very works or actions are properly the life of faith, as the spirit in the body; but it is the active, working nature of faith, of which the actions or works done are the signs, that is itself the life and spirit of faith. The sign of a thing is often in Scripture language said to be that thing; as it is in that comparison by which the apostle illustrates it. It is not the actions themselves of a body, that are properly the life or spirit of the body; but it is the active nature, of which those actions or motions are the signs, that is the life of the body. That which makes men call any thing alive, is, that they observe that it has an active, operative nature in it; which they observe no otherwise than by the actions or motions that are the signs of it. It is plainly the apostle's aim to prove that works are necessary from that, that if faith hath not works, it is a sign that it is not a good sort of faith; which

would not have been to his purpose, if it was his design to show that it is not by faith alone, though of a right sort, that we have acceptance with God, but that we are accepted on the account of obedience as well as faith. It is evident by the apostle's reasoning, that the necessity of works that he speaks of, is not as having a parallel concern in our salvation with faith; but he speaks of works only as related to faith, and expressive of it; which, after all, leaves faith the alone fundamental condition, without any thing else having a parallel concern with it in this affair; and other things conditions, only as several expressions and evidences of it.

That the apostle speaks of works justifying only as a sign or evidence, and in God's declarative judgment, is further confirmed by verse 21: "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered up Isaac his son upon the altar?" Here the apostle seems plainly to refer to that declarative judgment of God, concerning Abraham's sincerity, manifested to him, for the peace and assurance of his own conscience after his offering up Isaac his son on the altar, that we have account of Gen. xxii. 12: "Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me." But here it is plain, and expressed in the very words of justification or approbation, that this work of Abraham's, his offering up his son on the altar, justified him as an evidence. When the Apostle James says, we are justified by works, he may, and ought to be understood in a sense agreeable to the instance he brings for the proof of it: but justification in that instance appears by the works of justification themselves referred to, to be by works as an evidence. And where this instance of Abraham's obedience is elsewhere mentioned in the New Testament, it is mentioned as a fruit and evidence of his faith. Heb. xi. 17, "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises, offered up his only begotten son."

And in the other instance which the apostle mentions, verse 25: "Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?" The apostle refers to a declarative judgment, in that particular testimony which was given of God's approbation of her as a believer, in directing Joshua to save her when the rest of Jericho was destroyed, Josh. vi. 25: "And Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive, and her father's household, and all that she had; and she dwelleth in Israel even unto this day; because she hid the messengers which Joshua sent to spy out Jericho." This was accepted as an evidence and expression of her faith. Heb. xi. 32, "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace." The apostle in saying, "Was not Rahab the harlot justified by works?" by the manner of his speaking has reference to something in her history; but we have no account in her history of any other justification of her but this.

4. If, notwithstanding, any choose to take justification in St. James's precisely as we do in Paul's epistles, for God's acceptance or approbation itself, and not any expression of that approbation; what has been already said concerning the manner in which acts of evangelical obedience are concerned in the affair of our justification, affords a very easy, clear and full answer: for if we take works as acts or expressions of faith, they are not excluded; so a man is not justified by faith only, but also by works; i. e. he is not justified only by faith as a principle in the heart, or in its first and more immanent acts, but also by the effective acts of it in life, which are the expressions of the life of faith, as the operations and actions of the body are of the life of that; agreeable to verse 26.

What has been said in answer to these objections, may also, I hope, abundantly serve for an answer to that objection, that is often made against this doctrine, viz., that it encourages licentiousness in life. For, from what has been said, we may see that the Scripure doctrine of justification by faith alone, without any manner of goodness or excellency of ours, does in no wise diminish either the necessity or benefit of a sincere, evangelical, universal obedience in that, man's salvation is not only indissolubly connected with it, and damnation with the want of it, in those that have opportunity for it, but that it depends upon it in many respects; as it is the way to it, and the necessary preparation for it, and also as eternal blessings are bestowed in reward for it, and as our justification in our own consciences, and at the day of judgment, depends on it, as the proper evidence of our acceptable state; and that, even in accepting us as entitled to life in our justification, God has respect to this, as that on which the fitness of such an act of justification depends: so that our salvation does as truly depend upon it, as if we were justified for the moral excellency of it. And besides all this, the degree of our happiness to all eternity is suspended on, and determined by the degree of this. So that this gospel scheme of justification is as far from encouraging licentiousness, and contains as much to encourage and excite to strict and universal obedience, and the utmost possible eminency of holiness, as any scheme that can be devised, and indeed unspeakably more.

I come now to the last thing proposed, which is,

V. To consider the importance of this doctrine.

I know there are many that make as though this controversy was of no great importance; that it is chiefly a matter of nice speculation, depending on certain subtle distinctions, which many that make use of them do not understand themselves; and that the difference is not of such consequence as to be worth the being zealous about; and that more hurt is done by raising disputes about it than good.

Indeed I am far from thinking that it is of absolute necessity that persons should understand, and be agreed upon, all the distinctions needful particularly to explain and defend this doctrine against all cavils and objections (though all Christians should strive after an increase of knowledge, and none should content themselves without some clear and distinct understanding in this point): but that we should believe in the general, according to the clear and abundant revelations of God's word, that it is none of our own excellency, virtue, or righteousness, that is the ground of our being received from a state of condemnation into a state of acceptance in God's sight, but only Jesus Christ, and his righteousness, and worthiness, received by faith. This I think to be of great importance, at least in application to ourselves; and that for the following reasons.

1. The Scripture treats of this doctrine, as a doctrine of very great importance. That there is a certain doctrine of justification by faith, in opposition to justification by the works of the law, that the Apostle Paul insists upon as of the greatest importance, none will deny; because there is nothing in the Bible more apparent. The apostle, under the infallible conduct of the Spirit of God, thought it worth his most strenuous and zealous disputing about and defending. He speaks of the contrary doctrine as fatal and ruinous to the souls of men, in the latter end of the ninth chapter of Romans, and beginning of the tenth. He speaks of it as subversive of the gospel of Christ, and calls it another gospel, and says concerning it, if any one, "though an angel from heaven, preach it, let him be accursed;" Gal. i. 6—9 compared with the following

part of the epistle. Certainly we must allow the apostles to be good judges of the importance and tendency of doctrines; at least the Holy Ghost in them. And doubtless we are safe, and in no danger of harshness and censoriousness, if we only follow him, and keep close to his express teachings, in what we believe and say of the hurtful and pernicious tendency of any error. Why are we to blame, or to be cried out of, for saying what the Bible has taught us to say, or for believing what the Holy Ghost has taught us to that end that we might believe it?

2. The adverse scheme lays another foundation of man's salvation than God hath laid. I do not now speak of that ineffectual redemption that they suppose to be universal, and what all mankind are equally the subjects of; but I say, it lays entirely another foundation of man's actual, discriminating salvation, or that salvation, wherein true Christians differ from wicked men. We suppose the foundation of this to be Christ's worthiness and righteousness: on the contrary, that scheme supposes it to be men's own virtue; even so, that this is the ground of a saving interest in Christ itself. It takes away Christ out of the place of the bottom stone, and puts in men's own virtue in the room of him: so that Christ himself in the affair of distinguishing, actual salvation, is laid upon this foundation. And the foundation being so different, I leave it to every one to judge whether the difference between the two schemes consists only in punctilios of small consequence. The foundations being contrary, makes the whole scheme exceeding diverse and opposite; the one is a gospel scheme, the other a legal one.

3. It is in this doctrine that the most essential difference lies between the covenant of grace and the first covenant. The adverse scheme of justification supposes that we are justified by our works, in the very same sense wherein man was to have been justified by his works under the first covenant. By that covenant our first parents were not to have had eternal life given them for any proper merit in their obedience; because their perfect obedience was a debt that they owed God: nor was it to be bestowed for any proportion between the dignity of their obedience, and the value of the reward; but only it was to be bestowed from a regard to a moral fitness in the virtue of their obedience to the reward of God's favor; and a title to eternal life was to be given them, as a testimony of God's pleasedness with their works, or his regard to the inherent beauty of their virtue. And so it is the very same way that those in the adverse scheme suppose that we are received into God's special favor now, and to those saving benefits that are the testimonies of it. I am sensible the divines of that side entirely disclaim the Popish doctrine of merit; and are free to speak of our utter unworthiness, and the great imperfection of all our services: but after all, it is our virtue, imperfect as it is, that recommends men to God, by which good men come to have a saving interest in Christ, and God's favor, rather than others; and these things are bestowed in testimony of God's respect to their goodness. So that whether they will allow the term *merit* or no, yet they hold, that we are accepted by our own merit, in the same sense though not in the same degree as under the first covenant.

But the great and most distinguishing difference between that covenant and the covenant of grace is, that by the covenant of grace we are not thus justified by our own works, but only by faith in Jesus Christ. It is on this account chiefly that the new covenant deserves the name of a covenant of grace, as is evident by Rom. iv. 16: "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace." And chap. iii. 20, 24, "Therefore by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight—Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemp-

tion that is in Jesus Christ." And chap. xi. 6, "And if by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace: but if it be of works; then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work." Gal. v. 4, "Whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace." And therefore the apostle, when in the same epistle to the Galatians he speaks of the doctrine of justification by works as another gospel, he adds, "which is not another," chap. i. verses 6, 7. It is no gospel at all; it is law: it is no covenant of grace, but of works: it is not an evangelical, but a legal doctrine. Certainly that doctrine wherein consists the greatest and most essential difference between the covenant of grace and the first covenant, must be a doctrine of great importance. That doctrine of the gospel by which above all others it is worthy of the name gospel, is doubtless a very important doctrine of the gospel.

4. This is the main thing that fallen men stood in need of divine revelation for, to teach us how we that have sinned may come to be again accepted of God; or, which is the same thing, how the sinner may be justified. Something beyond the light of nature is necessary to salvation chiefly on this account. Mere natural reason afforded no means by which we could come to the knowledge of this, it depending on the sovereign pleasure of the Being that we had offended by sin. This seems to be the great drift of that revelation that God has given, and of all those mysteries it reveals, all those great doctrines that are peculiarly doctrines of revelation, and above the light of nature. It seems to have been very much on this account, that it was requisite that the doctrine of the Trinity itself should be revealed to us; that by a discovery of the concern of the several divine persons in the great affair of our salvation, we might the better understand and see how all our dependence in this affair is on God, and our sufficiency all in him, and not in ourselves; that he is all in all in this business, agreeable to that in 1 Cor. i. 29—31, "That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." What is the gospel, but only the glad tidings of a new way of acceptance with God unto life, a way wherein sinners may come to be free from the guilt of sin, and obtain a title to eternal life? And if, when this way is revealed, it is rejected, and another of man's devising be put in the room of it, without doubt it must be an error of great importance, and the apostle might well say it was another gospel.

5. The contrary scheme of justification derogates much from the honor of God and the Mediator. I have already shown how it diminishes the glory of the Mediator, in ascribing that to man's virtue and goodness, which belongs alone to his worthiness and righteousness.

By the apostle's sense of the matter it renders Christ needless: Gal. v. 4, "Christ is become of no effect to you, whosoever of you are justified by the law." If that scheme of justification be followed in its consequences, it utterly overthrows the glory of all the great things that have been contrived, and done, and suffered in the work of redemption. Gal. ii. 21, "If righteousness come by the law, Christ is dead in vain." It has also been already shown how it diminishes the glory of divine grace (which is the attribute God hath especially set himself to glorify in the work of redemption); and so that it greatly diminishes the obligation to gratitude in the sinner that is saved: yea, that in the sense of the apostle, it makes void the distinguishing grace of the gospel. Gal. v. 4, "Whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace." It diminishes the glory of the grace of God and the Redeemer, and proportionably magnifies

man: it makes him something before God, when indeed he is nothing: it makes the goodness and excellency of fallen man to be something, which I have shown are nothing. I have also already shown, that it is contrary to the truth of God in the threatening of his holy law, to justify the sinner for his virtue. And whether it were contrary to God's truth or no, it is a scheme of things very unworthy of God, that supposes that God, when about to lift up a poor, forlorn malefactor, condemned to eternal misery for sinning against his Majesty, out of his misery, and to make him unspeakably and eternally happy, by bestowing his Son and himself upon him, as it were, sets all this to sale, for the price of his virtue and excellency. I know that those we oppose do acknowledge, that the price is very disproportionate to the benefit bestowed; and say, that God's grace is wonderfully manifested in accepting so little virtue, and bestowing so glorious a reward for such imperfect righteousness. But seeing we are such infinitely sinful and abominable creatures in God's sight, and by our infinite guilt have brought ourselves into such wretched and deplorable circumstances, and all our righteousnesses are nothing, and ten thousand times worse than nothing (if God looks upon them as they be in themselves), is it not immensely more worthy of the infinite majesty and glory of God, to deliver and make happy such poor, filthy worms, such wretched vagabonds and captives, without any money or price of theirs, or any manner of expectation of any excellency or virtue in them, in any wise to recommend them? Will it not betray a foolish, exalting opinion of ourselves, and a mean one of God, to have a thought of offering any thing of ours, to recommend us to the favor of being brought from wallowing, like filthy swine, in the mire of our sins, and from the enmity and misery of devils in the lowest hell, to the state of God's dear children, in the everlasting arms of his love, in heavenly glory; or to imagine that that is the constitution of God, that we should bring our filthy rags, and offer them to him as the price of this?

6. The opposite scheme does most directly tend to lead men to trust in their own righteousness for justification, which is a thing fatal to the soul. This is what men are of themselves exceedingly prone to do (and that though they are never so much taught the contrary), through the exceeding partial and high thoughts they have of themselves, and their exceeding dulness of apprehending any such mystery as our being accepted for the righteousness of another. But this scheme does directly teach men to trust in their own righteousness for justification; in that it teaches them that this is indeed what they must be justified by, being the way of justification that God himself has appointed. So that if a man had naturally no disposition to trust in his own righteousness, yet if he embraced this scheme, and acted consistent with it, it would lead him to it. But that trusting in our own righteousness, is a thing fatal to the soul, is what the Scripture plainly teaches us: it tells us, that it will cause that Christ profit us nothing, and be of no effect to us, Gal. v. 2—4. For though the apostle speaks there particularly of circumcision, yet (I have shown already, that) it is not merely being circumcised, but trusting in circumcision as a righteousness, that the apostle has respect to. He could not mean, that merely being circumcised would render Christ of no profit or effect to a person; for we read that he himself, for certain reasons, took Timothy and circumcised him, Acts xvi. 3. And the same is evident by the context, and by the rest of the epistle. And the apostle speaks of trusting in their own righteousness as fatal to the Jews, Rom. ix. 31, 32: "But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law; for they stumbled at

that stumbling stone." Together with chap. x. verse 3, "For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." And this is spoken of as fatal to the Pharisees, in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, that Christ spake to them to reprove them for trusting in themselves that they were righteous. The design of the parable is to show them, that the very publicans shall be justified, rather than they; as appears by the reflection Christ makes upon it, Luke xviii. 14: "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other;" that is, this and not the other. The fatal tendency of it might also be proved from its inconsistence with the nature of justifying faith, and also its inconsistence with the nature of that humiliation that the Scripture often speaks of as absolutely necessary to salvation; but these Scriptures are so express, that it is needless to bring any further arguments.

How far a wonderful and mysterious agency of God's Spirit may so influence some men's hearts, that their practice in this regard may be contrary to their own principles, so that they shall not trust in their own righteousness, though they profess that men are justified by their own righteousness; or how far they believe the doctrine of justification by men's own righteousness in general, and yet not believe it in a particular application of it to themselves; or how far that error which they may have been led into by education, or cunning sophistry of others, may yet be indeed contrary to the prevailing disposition of their hearts, and contrary to their practice: or how far some may seem to maintain a doctrine contrary to this gospel doctrine of justification, that really do not, but only express themselves differently from others; or seem to oppose it through their misunderstanding of our expressions, or we of theirs, when indeed our real sentiments are the same in the main; or may seem to differ more than they do, by using terms that are without a precisely fixed and determinate meaning; or to be wide in their sentiments from this doctrine, for want of a distinct understanding of it, whose hearts, at the same time, entirely agree with it, and if once it was clearly explained to their understandings, would immediately close with it, and embrace it: how far these things may be, I will not determine; but am fully persuaded that great allowances are to be made on these and such like accounts, in innumerable instances; though it is manifest, from what has been said, that the teaching and propagating contrary doctrines and schemes are of a pernicious and fatal tendency.

SERMON V.

THE WISDOM OF GOD, DISPLAYED IN THE WAY OF SALVATION.

EPHESIANS iii. 10.—To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.

Introduction.

THE apostle is speaking in the context of the glorious doctrine of the redemption of sinners by Jesus Christ; and how it was in a great measure kept hid in the past ages of the world. It was a mystery that before they did not understand, but now it was in a glorious manner brought to light. Ver. 3—5, "By revelation he made known unto me the mystery (as I wrote afore in few words; whereby when ye read ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets, by the Spirit." And ver. 8, 9, "Unto me who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ."

And the apostle in the text informs us, that what Christ had accomplished towards his church, in the work of redemption, had not only in a great measure unveiled the mystery to the church in this world; but God had more clearly and fully opened it to the understanding even of the angels themselves; and that this was one end of God in it, to discover the glory of his wisdom to the angels. "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God."

One end of revealing God's counsels concerning the work of redemption, is making known God's *wisdom*. It is called *manifold* wisdom; because of the manifold glorious ends that are attained by it. The excellent designs, hereby accomplished, are very manifold. The wisdom of God in this is of vast extent. The contrivance is so manifold, that one may spend an eternity in discovering more of the excellent ends and designs accomplished by it; and the multitude and vast variety of things that are, by divine contrivance, brought to conspire to the bringing about those ends.

We may observe, *to whom* it is that God would manifest this his wisdom, by revealing the mystery of our redemption;—and they are not only men, but the *angels*. "To the intent that now unto the *principalities* and *powers in heavenly places* might be known—the manifold wisdom of God." The angels are often called principalities and powers, because of the exalted dignity of their nature. The angels excel in strength and wisdom. Those who are the *wise men* of the earth are called *princes* in the style of the apostle, 1 Cor. ii. 6: "Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect, yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world."—Ver. 8, "Which none of the princes of this world knew; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." So the angels are called principalities for their great wisdom. They may also be so called for the honor God has put upon them, in employing them as his ministers and instruments, wherewith he governs the

world: and therefore are called thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers, Col. i. 16.

They are called principalities and powers in *heavenly* places, as distinguishing them from those that are in places of *earthly* power and dignity. The offices or places of dignity and power that the angels sustain, are not earthly, but *heavenly*. They are in places of honor and power in the *heavenly city* and the *heavenly kingdom*.

One end of God in revealing his design or contrivance for redemption, as he hath so fully and gloriously done by Jesus Christ, is that the angels in heaven may behold the glory of his wisdom by it. Though they are such bright intelligences, and do always behold the face of God the Father, and know so much; yet here is matter of instruction for them. Here they may see more of the divine wisdom than ever they had seen before. It was a new discovery of the wisdom of God to them.

The *time* when this display of the wisdom of God was especially made to the angels is, when Christ introduced the gospel dispensation, implied in those words, "To the intent that *now* unto the principalities," &c. When Christ came into the world and died, and actually performed the work of redemption—when he had fully and plainly revealed the counsels of God concerning it; and accordingly introduced the evangelical dispensation, and erected the gospel church—then the angels understood more of the mystery of man's redemption, and the manifold designs and counsels of divine wisdom, than ever they had done before.

In the foregoing verse the apostle, after speaking of revealing this wisdom of God to man, "and to make all *men* see, what is the fellowship of this mystery," &c., speaks of this mystery as a thing from the beginning kept hid till now, "The mystery, which from the beginning of the world had been hid in God—that now," &c. In this verse he mentions another end, viz., that he may, at the same time, make the *angels* also see God's wisdom in his glorious scheme of redemption.—"Now," at this time, implies that it was before a mystery kept hid from them in comparison of what it is now. And here is room enough for the angels to discover more and more to all eternity of the wisdom of God in this work.

Observe the *medium* by which the angels come by this knowledge, viz., the church.—"That now unto principalities—might be known *by the church*,"—i. e., by the things they see done *in* the church, or *towards* the church: and by what they see *concerning* the church. So hath it pleased the sovereign God, that the angels should have the most glorious discoveries of divine wisdom by his doings towards his church, a sort of beings much inferior to themselves. It hath pleased God to put this honor upon us.

The wisdom appearing in the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, is far above the wisdom of the angels. For here it is mentioned as one end of God in revealing the contrivance of our salvation, that the angels thereby might see and know how great and manifold the wisdom of God is; to hold forth the divine wisdom to the angels' view and admiration. But why is it so, if this wisdom be not higher than their own wisdom? It never would have been mentioned as one end of revealing the contrivance of redemption, that the angels might see how manifold God's wisdom is; if all the wisdom to be seen in it was no greater than their own. It is mentioned as a wisdom such as they had never seen before, not in God, much less in themselves. That *now* might be known how manifold the wisdom of God is; now, four thousand years since the creation.—In all that time the angels had always beheld the face of God; and had

been studying God's works of creation; yet they never, till that day, had seen any thing like that; never knew how *manifold* God's wisdom is, as now they knew it by the church.

SECTION. I.

Wonderful things done, by which salvation is procured.

Such is the choice of the person chosen to be our redeemer,—the substituting of him in our room;—his incarnation—his life—his death—and exaltation. And,

1. We will consider the *choice of the person* to be our redeemer. When God designed the redemption of mankind, his great wisdom appears in that he pitched upon his own, his only-begotten Son, to be the person to perform the work. He was a redeemer of God's own choosing, and therefore he is called in Scripture, God's *elect*, Isa. lxii. 1. The wisdom of choosing this person to be the redeemer, appears in his being every way a *fit* person for this undertaking. It was necessary, that the person that is the redeemer, should be a *divine* person.—None but a *divine* person was sufficient for this great work. The work is infinitely unequal to any creature. It was requisite, that the redeemer of sinners, should be himself infinitely *holy*. None could take away the infinite evil of sin, but one that was infinitely far from and contrary to sin himself. Christ is a fit person upon this account.

It was requisite, that the person, in order to be sufficient for this undertaking, should be one of infinite *dignity* and worthiness, that he might be capable of meriting infinite blessings. The Son of God is a fit person on this account. It was necessary, that he should be a person of infinite *power* and *wisdom;* for this work is so difficult, that it requires such a one. Christ is a fit person also upon this account. It was requisite, that he should be a person infinitely *dear* to God the Father, in order to give an infinite value to his transactions in the Father's esteem, and that the Father's love to him might balance the offence and provocation by our sins. Christ is a fit person upon this account. Therefore called *the beloved*, Eph. i. 6. He hath made us accepted in the *beloved*.

It was requisite that the person should be one that could act in this as of *his own absolute right:* one that, in himself, is not a servant or subject; because, if he is one that cannot act of his own right, he cannot merit any thing. He that is a servant, and that can do no more than he is bound to do, cannot merit. And then he that has nothing that is absolutely his own, cannot pay any price to redeem another. Upon this account Christ is a fit person; and none but a divine person can be fit.—And he must be a person also of infinite *mercy* and *love;* for no other person but such a one would undertake a work so difficult, for a creature so unworthy as man.—Upon this account also Christ is a fit person.—It was requisite that he should be a person of unchangeable perfect *truth* and faithfulness; otherwise he would not be fit to be depended on by us in so great an affair. Christ is also a fit person upon this account.

The wisdom of God in choosing his eternal Son, appears, not only in that he is a fit person; but in that he was the *only* fit person of all persons, whether created or uncreated. No *created* person, neither man, nor angel, was fit for this undertaking; for we have just now shown, that he must be a person of *infinite* holiness—dignity—power—wisdom; infinitely dear to God—of infinite love and mercy; and one that may act of his own absolute right. But no creature, how excellent soever, has any one of these qualifications.—There are three *uncreated* persons, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and Christ alone of these

was a suitable person for a redeemer. It was not meet, that the redeemer should be God the *Father;* because he, in the divine economy of the persons of the Trinity, was the person that holds the rights of the Godhead, and so was the person offended, whose justice required satisfaction; and was to be appeased by a mediator. It was not meet it should be the *Holy Ghost*, for in being mediator between the Father and the saints, he is in some sense so between the Father and the Spirit. The saints, in all their spiritual transactions with God, act by the Spirit; or rather, it is the Spirit of God that acts in them; they are the temples of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Spirit dwelling in them, is their principle of action, in all their transactings with God. But in these their spiritual transactings with God, they act by a *mediator*. These spiritual and holy exercises cannot be acceptable, or avail any thing with God, as from a fallen creature, but by a mediator. Therefore Christ, in being mediator between the Father and the saints, may be said to be mediator between the Father and the Holy Spirit, that acts in the saints. And therefore it was meet, that the mediator should not be either the Father or the Spirit, but a middle person between them both It is the Spirit in the saints, that seeks the blessing of God, by faith and prayer; and, as the apostle says, with groanings that cannot be uttered: Rom. viii. 26, "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, with groanings that cannot be uttered." The Spirit in the saints seeks divine blessings of God, by and through a mediator; and therefore that mediator must not be the Spirit, but another person.

It shows a divine wisdom, to *know* that he was a fit person. No other but one of *divine* wisdom could have known it. None but one of infinite wisdom could have thought of him to be a redeemer of sinners. For he, as he is God, is one of the persons offended by sin; against whom man by his sin had rebelled. Who but God infinitely wise could ever have thought of *him* to be a redeemer of sinners; against whom they had sinned, to whom they were enemies, and of whom they deserved infinitely ill? Who would ever have thought of him as one that should set his heart upon man, and exercise infinite love and pity to him, and exhibit infinite wisdom, power, and merit in redeeming him? We proceed,

2. To consider the *substituting* of this person in our room. After choosing the person to be our redeemer, the next step of divine wisdom is, to contrive the way how he should perform this work. If God had declared who the person was, that should do this work, and had gone no further; no creature could have thought which way this person could have performed the work. If God had told them, that his own Son must be the redeemer; and that he alone was a fit person for the work; and that he was a person every way fit and sufficient for it,—but had proposed to *them* to contrive a way how this fit and sufficient person should proceed,—we may well suppose that all created understandings would have been utterly at a loss.

The first thing necessary to be done, is, that this Son of God should become our representative and surety; and so be substituted in the sinner's room. But who of created intelligences would have thought of any such thing as the eternal and infinitely beloved Son of God being substituted in the room of sinners? his standing in stead of a sinner, a rebel, an object of the wrath of God? Who would have thought of a person of infinite glory representing sinful worms, that had made themselves by sin infinitely provoking and abominable?

For, if the Son of God be substituted in the sinner's room, then his sin must be charged upon him: he will thereby take the guilt of the sinner upon him-

self; he must be subject to the same law that man was, both as to the commands, and threatenings: but who would have thought of any such thing concerning the Son of God? But we proceed,

3. To consider the *incarnation* of Jesus Christ. The next step of divine wisdom in contriving how Christ should perform the work of redeeming sinners, was in determining his incarnation. Suppose God had revealed his counsels thus far to created understandings, that his own Son was the person chosen for this work, that he had substituted him in the sinner's room, and appointed him to take the sinner's obligations and guilt on himself—and had revealed no more, but had left the rest to them to find out; it is no way probable, that even then they could ever have thought of a way, whereby this person might actually have performed the work of redemption. For if the Son of God be substituted in the sinner's stead, then he takes the sinner's obligations on himself. For instance, he must take the obligation the sinner is under to perform *perfect obedience* to the divine law. But it is not probable, that any creature could have conceived how that could be possible.—How should a person who is the eternal JEHOVAH, become a servant, be under law, and perform obedience even to the law of man?

And again, if the Son of God be substituted in the sinner's stead, then he comes under the sinner's obligation to suffer the punishment which man's sin deserved. And who could have thought that to be possible? For how should a divine person, who is essentially, unchangeably, and infinitely happy, suffer pain and torment? And how should he who is the object of God's infinitely dear love, suffer the wrath of his Father? It is not to be supposed, that created wisdom ever would have found out a way how to have got over these difficulties. But divine wisdom hath found out a way, viz., by the incarnation of the Son of God. That the Word should be made flesh, that he might be both God and man, in one person: what created understanding could have conceived that such a thing was possible? Yet these things could never be *proved* to be *impossible*. This distinction duly considered will show the futility of many Socinian objections.

And if God had revealed to them, that it was possible, and even that it should be, but left them to find out *how* it should be; we may well suppose that they would all have been puzzled and confounded, to conceive of a way for so uniting a man to the eternal Son of God, that they should be but one person; that one who is truly a man in all respects, should indeed be the very same Son of God, that was with God from all eternity. This is a great mystery to us. Hereby, a person that is infinite, omnipotent, and unchangeable, is become, in a sense, a finite, a feeble man; a man subject to our sinless infirmities, passions, and calamities! The great God, the sovereign of heaven and earth, is thus become a worm of the dust. Psal. xxii. 6, "I am a worm, and no man." He that is eternal and self-existent, is by this union born of a woman! He who is the great original Spirit, is clothed with flesh and blood like one of us! He who is independent, self-sufficient, and all-sufficient, now is come to stand in need of food and clothing: he becomes poor, "has not where to lay his head;"—stands in need of the charity of men; and is maintained by it! It is far above us, to conceive *how* it is done. It is a great wonder and mystery to us; but it was no mystery to divine wisdom.

4. The next thing to be considered is, the *life* of Christ in this world. The wisdom of God appears in the circumstances of his life—and in the work and business of his life.

(1.) The *circumstances* of his life. If God had revealed that his own Son

should be incarnate, and should live in this world in the human nature; and it had been left to men to determine what circumstances of life would have been most suitable for him, human wisdom would have determined that he should appear in the world in a most magnificent manner; with very extraordinary outward ensigns of honor, authority, and power, far above any of the kings of the earth: that here he should reign in great visible pomp and splendor over all nations.—And thus it was that men's wisdom *did* determine before Christ came. The wise, the great men among the Jews, Scribes and Pharisees, who are called "Princes of this world," *did* expect that the Messiah would thus appear. But the wisdom of God chose quite otherwise: it chose that when the Son of God became man, he should begin his life in a stable; for many years dwell obscurely in a family of a low degree in the world; and be in low outward circumstances: that he should be poor, and not have where to lay his head: that he should be maintained by the charity of some of his disciples: that he should "grow up as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground," Isa. liii. 2: that he should "not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets," Isa. xlii. 2: that he should come to Zion in a lowly manner, "riding on an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass:" that he should be "despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."

And now the divine determination in this matter is made known, we may safely conclude that it is far the most suitable; and that it would not have been at all suitable for God, when he was manifest in flesh, to appear with earthly pomp, wealth, and grandeur. No! these things are infinitely too mean and despicable, for the Son of God to show as if he affected or esteemed them. Men, if they had had this way proposed to them, would have been ready to condemn it as foolish and very unsuitable for the Son of God. But "the foolishness of God is wiser than men," 1 Cor. i. 25. "And God hath brought to nought the wisdom of this world, and the princes of this world," 1 Cor. ii. 6. Christ, by thus appearing in mean and low outward circumstances in this world, has poured contempt upon all worldly wealth and glory; and has taught us to despise it. And if it becomes mean men to despise them, how much more did it become the Son of God! And then Christ hereby hath taught us to be lowly in heart. If he who is infinitely high and great, was thus lowly; how lowly should we be, who are indeed so vile!

(2.) The wisdom of God appears in the *work* and business of the life of Christ. Particularly, that he should perfectly obey the law of God, under such great temptations: that he should have conflicts with, and overcome for us, in a way of obedience, the powers of earth and hell; that he should be subject to, not only the *moral* law, but the *ceremonial* also, that heavy yoke of bondage. Christ went through the time of his public ministry, in delivering to us divine instructions and doctrines. The wisdom of God appears in giving us such a one to be our prophet and teacher, who is a divine person: who is himself the very wisdom and word of God; and was from all eternity in the bosom of the Father. His word is of greater authority and weight than if delivered by the mouth of an ordinary prophet. And how wisely ordered that the same should be our teacher and Redeemer; in order that his relations and offices, as Redeemer, might the more sweeten and endear his instructions to us. We are ready to give heed to what is said by those who are dear to us. Our love to their persons makes us to delight in their discourse. It is therefore wisely ordered, that he who has done so much to endear himself to us, should be appointed our great prophet, to deliver to us divine doctrines.

5. The next thing to be considered is the death of Christ. This is a means

of salvation for poor sinners, that no other but divine wisdom would have pitched upon; and when revealed, it was doubtless greatly to the surprise of all the hosts of heaven, and they never will cease to wonder at it. How astonishing is it, that a person who is blessed for ever, and is infinitely and essentially happy, should endure the greatest sufferings that ever were endured on earth! That a person who is the supreme Lord and judge of the world, should be arraigned, and should stand at the judgment-seat of mortal worms, and then be condemned. That a person who is the living God, and the fountain of life, should be put to death. That a person who created the world, and gives life to all his creatures, should be put to death by his own creatures. That a person of infinite majesty and glory, and so the object of the love, praises, and adorations of angels, should be mocked and spit upon by the vilest of men. That a person, infinitely good, and who is love itself, should suffer the greatest cruelty. That a person who is infinitely beloved of the Father, should be put to inexpressible anguish under his own Father's wrath. That he who is King of heaven, who hath heaven for his throne, and the earth for his footstool, should be buried in the prison of the grave. How wonderful is this! And yet this is the way that God's wisdom hath fixed upon, as the way of sinners' salvation; as neither unsuitable nor dishonorable to Christ.

6. The last thing done to procure salvation for sinners, is Christ's *exaltation*. Divine wisdom saw it needful, or most expedient, that the same person who died upon the cross, should sit at his right hand, on his own throne, as Supreme Governor of the world; and should have particularly the absolute disposal of all things relating to man's salvation, and should be the judge of the world. This was needful, because it was requisite that the same person who purchased salvation, should have the bestowing of it; for it is not fit, that God should at all transact with the fallen creature in a way of mercy, but by a mediator. And this is exceedingly for the strengthening of the faith and comfort of the saints, that he who hath endured so much to purchase salvation for them, has all things in heaven and in earth delivered unto him; that he might bestow eternal life on them for whom he purchased it. And that the same person that loved them so greatly as to shed his precious blood for them, was to be their final judge.

This then was another thing full of wonders, that he who was man as well as God; he who was a servant, and died like a malefactor; should be made the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, angels and men; the absolute disposer of eternal life and death; the supreme judge of all created intelligent beings, for eternity: and should have committed to him all the governing power of God the Father; and that, not only as God, but as God-man, not exclusive of the human nature.

As it is wonderful, that a person who is truly *divine* should be humbled so as to become a servant, and to suffer as a malefactor; so it is in like manner wonderful, that he who is God-man, not exclusive of the manhood, should be exalted to the power and honor of the great God of heaven and earth. But such wonders as these has infinite wisdom contrived, and accomplished in order to our salvation.

SECTION II.

In this way of salvation God is greatly glorified.

God has greatly glorified himself in the work of creation and providence. All his works praise him, and his glory shines brightly from them all: but as some stars differ from others in glory, so the glory of God shines brighter in

some of his works than in others. And amongst all these, the work of redemption is like the sun in his strength. The glory of the author is abundantly the most resplendent in this work.

I. Each *attribute* of God is glorified in the work of redemption. How God has exceedingly glorified his *wisdom*, may more fully appear before we have done with this subject. But more particularly,

1. God hath exceedingly glorified his *power* in this work.—It shows the great and inconceivable power of God to unite natures so infinitely different, as the divine and human nature, in one person. If God can make one who is truly God, and one that is truly man, the self-same person, what is it that he cannot do? This is a greater and more marvellous work than creation.

The power of God most gloriously appears in man's being actually saved and redeemed in this way. In his being brought out of a state of sin and misery, into a conformity to God; and at last to the full and perfect enjoyment of God. This is a more glorious demonstration of divine power, than creating things out of nothing, upon two accounts. One is, the *effect is greater and more excellent.* To produce the new creature is a more glorious effect, than merely to produce a creature.—Making a holy creature, a creature in the spiritual image of God, in the image of the divine excellencies, and a partaker of the divine nature—is a greater effect than merely to give being. And therefore as the effect is greater, it is a more glorious manifestation of power.

And then, in this effect of the actual redemption of sinners, *the term from which, is more distant from the term to which,* than in the work of creation. The term from which, in the work of creation, is *nothing*, and the term to which, is *being*. But the term from which, in the work of redemption, is a state *infinitely worse than nothing;* and the term to which, *a holy and a happy being*, a state infinitely better than mere being. The terms in the production of the last, are much more remote from one another, than in the first.

And then the production of this last effect, is a more glorious manifestation of power than the work of creation; because, though in creation, the terms are very distant—as *nothing* is very remote from *being*—yet there is no opposition. Nothing makes no opposition to the creating power of God.—But in redemption, the divine power meets with and overcomes great opposition. There is great opposition in a state of sin to a state of grace. Men's lusts and corruptions are exceedingly opposite to grace and holiness; and greatly resist the production of the effect. But this opposition is completely overcome in actual redemption.

Besides, there is great opposition from Satan. The power of God is very glorious in this work, because it therein conquers the strongest and most powerful enemies. Power never appears more illustrious than in conquering. Jesus Christ, in this work, conquers and triumphs over thousands of devils, strong and mighty spirits, uniting all their strength against him. Luke xi. 21, "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than he shall overcome him, he taketh from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoil." Col. ii. 15, "And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in the cross."

2. The *justice* of God is exceedingly glorified in this work. God is so strictly and immutably just, that he would not spare his beloved Son when he took upon him the guilt of men's sins, and was substituted in the room of sinners. He would not abate him the least mite of that debt which justice demanded. Justice should take place, though it cost his infinitely dear Son his precious

blood; and his enduring such extraordinary reproach, and pain, and death in its most dreadful form.

3. The *holiness* of God is also exceedingly glorious in this work. Never did God so manifest his hatred of sin as in the death and sufferings of his only-begotten Son. Hereby he showed himself unappeasable to sin, and that it was impossible for him to be at peace with it.

4. God hath also exceedingly glorified his *truth* in this way, both in his threatenings and promises. Herein is fulfilled the threatenings of the law, wherein God said, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." And "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." God showed hereby, that not only heaven and earth should pass away, but, which is more, that the blood of him who is the eternal Jehovah should be spilt, rather than one jot or tittle of his word should fail, till all be fulfilled.

5. And lastly, God has exceedingly glorified his *mercy* and love in this work. —The mercy of God was an attribute never seen before in its exercise, till it was seen in this work of redemption, or the fruits of it. The goodness of God appeared towards the angels in giving them being and blessedness. It appeared glorious towards man in his primitive state, a state of holiness and happiness. But now God hath shown that he can find in his heart to love sinners who deserve his infinite hatred. And not only hath he shown that he can love them, but love them so as to give them more and do greater things for them than ever he did for the holy angels, that never sinned nor offended their Creator. He loved sinful men so as to give them a greater gift than ever he gave the angels; so as to give his own Son, and not only to give him to be their possession and enjoyment, but to give him to be their sacrifice. And herein he has done more for them, than if he had given them all the visible world; yea, more than if he had given them all the angels, and all heaven besides. God hath loved them so, that hereby he purchased for them deliverance from eternal misery, and the possession of immortal glory.

II. Each *person* of the Trinity is exceedingly glorified in this work. Herein the work of redemption is distinguished from all the other works of God. The attributes of God are glorious in his other works; but the three persons of the Trinity are distinctly glorified in no work as in this of redemption. In this work every distinct person has his distinct parts and offices assigned him. Each one has his particular and distinct concern in it, agreeable to their distinct, personal properties, relations, and economical offices. The redeemed have an equal concern with and dependence upon each person, in this affair, and owe equal honor and praise to each of them.

The Father appoints and provides the Redeemer, and accepts the price of redemption. The Son is the Redeemer and the price. He redeems by offering up himself. The Holy Ghost immediately communicates to us the thing purchased; yea, and he is the good purchased. The sum of what Christ purchased for us is holiness and happiness. But the Holy Ghost is the great principle both of all holiness and happiness. The Holy Ghost is the sum of all that Christ purchased for men. Gal. iii. 13, 14, "He was made a curse for us, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit, through faith."

The blessedness of the redeemed consists in partaking of Christ's fulness which consists in partaking of that Spirit, which is given not by measure unto him. This is the oil that was poured upon the head of the church, which ran down to the members of his body, to the skirts of his garment. Thus we have an equal concern with and dependence upon each of the persons of the Trinity,

distinctly; upon the Father, as he provides the Redeemer, and the person of whom the purchase is made;—the Son as the purchaser, and the price;—the Holy Ghost, as the good purchased.

SECTION. III.

The good attained by salvation is wonderfully various and exceeding great.

Here we may distinctly consider—the *variety*—and the *greatness*—of the good procured for men.

I. The good procured by salvation is wonderfully *various*. Here are all sorts of good procured for fallen man, that he *does* or *can* really need, or is *capable* of. The wisdom of God appears in the way of salvation, in that it is most worthy of an infinitely wise God, because every way perfect and sufficient. We, in our fallen state, are most necessitous creatures, full of wants: but they are here all answered. Every sort of good is here procured; whatever would really contribute to our happiness, and even many things we could not have thought of, had not Christ purchased them for us, and revealed them to us. Every demand of our circumstances, and craving of our natures, is here exactly answered.—For instance,

1. We stand in need of *peace* with God. We had provoked God to anger, his wrath abode upon us, and we needed to have it appeased. This is done for us in this way of salvation; for Christ, by shedding his blood, has fully satisfied justice, and appeased God's wrath, for all that shall believe in him. By the sentence of the law we were condemned to hell; and we needed to have our sins pardoned that we might be delivered from hell. But in this work, pardon of sin and deliverance from hell, is fully purchased for us.

2. We needed not only to have God's wrath appeased, and our sins pardoned; but we needed to have the *favor* of God. To have God, not only not our enemy, but our friend. Now God's favor is purchased for us by the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

3. We needed not only to be delivered from hell, but to have some *satisfying happiness* bestowed. Man has a natural craving and thirst after happiness; and will thirst and crave until his capacity is filled. And his capacity is of vast extent; and nothing but an infinite good can fill and satisfy his desires. But, notwithstanding, provision is made in this way of salvation to answer those needs, there is a satisfying happiness purchased for us; that which is fully answerable to the capacity and cravings of our souls.

Here is food procured to answer all the appetites and faculties of our souls. God has made the soul of man of a spiritual nature; and therefore he needs a corresponding happiness; some spiritual object, in the enjoyment of which he may be happy. Christ has purchased the enjoyment of God, who is the great and original Spirit, as the portion of our souls. And he hath purchased the Spirit of God to come and dwell in us as an eternal principle of happiness.

God hath made man a rational intelligent creature; and man needs some good that shall be a suitable object of his understanding, for him to contemplate; wherein he may have full and sufficient exercise for his capacious faculties, in their utmost extent. Here is an object that is great and noble, and worthy of the exercise of the noblest faculties of the rational soul.—God himself should be theirs, for them for ever to behold and contemplate; his glorious perfections and works are most worthy objects; and there is room enough for improving them, and still to exercise their faculties to all eternity.—What object can be more worthy to exercise the understanding of a rational soul, than the glories

of the Divine Being, with which the heavenly intelligences, and even the infinite understanding of God himself is entertained?

Our souls need some good that shall be a suitable object of the will and affections; a suitable object for the choice, the acquiescence, the love, and the joy of the rational soul. Provision is made for this also in this way of salvation. There is an infinitely excellent Being offered to be chosen, to be rested in, to be loved, to be rejoiced in, by us: even God himself, who is infinitely lovely, the fountain of all good; a fountain that can never be exhausted, where we can be in no danger of going to excess in our love and joy: and here we may be assured ever to find our joy and delight in enjoyments answerable to our love and desires.

4. There is all possible enjoyment of this object, procured in this way of salvation. When persons entirely set their love upon another, they naturally desire to *see* that person: merely to hear of the person, does not satisfy love. So here is provision made that we should see God, the object of our supreme love. Not only that we should hear and read of him in his word, but that we should see him with a spiritual eye here: and not only so, but that we should have the satisfaction of seeing God face to face hereafter. This is promised, Matt. v. 8: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." It is promised that we shall not see God, as through a glass darkly, as we do now, but face to face, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. That we shall see Christ as he is, 1 John iii. 2.

We naturally desire not only to see those whom we love, but to *converse with* them. Provision is made for this also, that we should have spiritual conversation with God while in this world; and that we should be hereafter admitted to converse with Christ in the most intimate manner possible. Provision is made in this way of salvation, that we should converse with God much more intimately, than otherwise it would have been possible for us; for now Christ is incarnate, is in our nature: he is become one of us, whereby we are under advantages for an immensely more free and intimate converse with him, than could have been, if he had remained only in the divine nature; and so in a nature infinitely distant from us.—We naturally desire not only to converse with those whom we greatly love, but to *dwell* with them. Provision, through Christ, is made for this. It is purchased and provided that we should dwell with God in his own house in heaven, which is called our Father's house.—To dwell for ever in God's presence, and at his right hand.

We naturally desire to have a *right* in that person whom we greatly love. Provision is made, in this way of salvation, that we should have a right *in* God; a right *to* him. This is the promise of the covenant of grace, "That he will be our God." God, with all his glorious perfections and attributes, with all his power and wisdom, and with all his majesty and glory, will be ours; so that we may call him our inheritance, and the portion of our souls: what we can humbly claim by faith, having this portion made over to us by a firm instrument; by a covenant ordered in all things and sure.—And we may also hereby claim a right to Jesus Christ. Love desires that the right should be *mutual*. The lover desires, not only to have a right to the beloved, but *that the beloved should have a right to him:* he desires to be his beloved's, as well as his beloved should be his. Provision is also made for this, in this wise method of salvation, that God should have a special propriety in the redeemed, that they should be in a distinguishing manner *his*, that they should be his *peculiar* people. We are told that God sets apart the godly for himself, Psal. iv. 3. They are called God's jewels. The spouse speaks it with great satisfaction and rejoicing, Cant. ii. 16: "My beloved is mine, and I am his."

Love desires to stand in some *near relation* to the beloved. Provision is made by Christ, that we should stand in the nearest possible relation to God; that he should be our Father, and we should be his children. We are often instructed in the Holy Scriptures, that God is the Father of believers, and that they are his family.—And not only so, but they stand in the nearest relation to Christ Jesus. There is the closest union possible. The souls of believers are married to Christ. The church is the bride, the Lamb's wife. Yea, there is yet a nearer relation than can be represented by such a similitude. Believers are as the very members of Christ, and of his flesh and of his bones, Eph. v. 30. Yea, this is not near enough yet, but *they are one spirit*, 1 Cor. vi. 17.

Love naturally inclines to a *conformity* to the beloved. To have those excellencies, upon the account of which he is beloved, copied in himself. Provision is made in this way of salvation, that we may be conformed to God; that we shall be transformed into the same image. 2 Cor. iii. 18, "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory."—And that hereafter we shall see him as he is, and be like him.

It is the natural desire of love to *do something* for the beloved, either for his pleasure or honor. Provision is made for this also in this way of salvation; that we should be made instruments of glorifying God, and promoting his kingdom here, and of glorifying him to all eternity.

5. In this way of salvation, provision is made for our having *every sort of good* that man naturally craves; as honor, wealth, and pleasure.—Here is provision made that we should be brought to the highest *honor*. This is what God has promised, *that those that honor him, he will honor*. And that true Christians shall be kings and priests unto God.—Christ has promised, *that as his Father has appointed unto him a kingdom, so he will appoint unto them, that they may eat and drink at his table in his kingdom*. He has promised to crown them with a crown of glory, and that *they shall sit with him in his throne. That he will confess their names before his Father, and before his angels. That he will give them a new name;* and that they *shall walk with him in white.*

Christ has also purchased for them the *greatest wealth*. All those that are in Christ are rich. They are *now* rich. They have the *best* riches; being rich in faith, and the graces of the Spirit of God. They have gold tried in the fire. They have durable riches and righteousness. They have treasure in heaven, where neither thief approacheth, nor moth corrupteth, an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. They are possessors of all things.

Christ has also purchased *pleasure* for them; pleasures that are immensely preferable to all the pleasures of sense, most exquisitely sweet, and satisfying. He has purchased for them fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore at God's right hand; and they shall drink of the river of God's pleasure.

6. Christ has purchased all needed good *both for soul and body*. While we are here, we stand in need of these earthly things; and of these Christ has purchased all that are best for us. He has purchased for the body, that God should feed and clothe us. Matt. vi. 26, "How much more shall he *feed* you, O ye of little faith!" How much more shall he *clothe* you! Christ has purchased, that God should take care of us, and provide what is needed of these things, as a father provides for his children. 1 Pet. v. 7, "Casting your care upon him, for he careth for you."

7. Christ has purchased good that is suitable for his people *in all conditions*. There is, in this way of salvation, respect had to, and provision made for, all circumstances that they can be in. Here is provision made, for a time of af-

fliction—for a time of poverty and pinching want—for a time of bereavement and mourning—for spiritual darkness—for a day of temptation—for a time of persecution—and for a time of death. Here is such a provision made that is sufficient to carry a person above death, and all its terrors; and to give him a complete triumph over that king of terrors. Here is enough to sweeten the grave and make it cease to seem terrible. Yea, enough to make death in prospect to seem desirable; and in its near approach to be not terrible but joyful.

8. There is provision made in this way of salvation for the life and blessedness of soul and body *to all eternity*. Christ has purchased, that we should be delivered from a state of temporal death, as well as *spiritual* and *eternal*. The bodies of the saints shall be raised to life. He has purchased all manner of perfection for the body of which it is capable. It shall be raised a spiritual body in incorruption and glory, and be made like Christ's glorious body, to shine as the sun in the kingdom of his Father, and to exist in a glorified state in union with the soul to all eternity.

9. But man in his fallen state still needs something else in order to his happiness, than that these forementioned blessings should be purchased for him; viz., he needs to be *qualified* for the possession and enjoyment of them. In order to our having a title to *these* blessings of the covenant of grace (so that we can scripturally *claim* an interest in them), there is a certain condition must be performed by us. We must *believe* in the Lord Jesus Christ, and *accept* of him as offered in the gospel for a Saviour. But, as we cannot do this of ourselves, Christ has purchased this also for all the elect. He has purchased, that they shall have faith given them; whereby they shall be [actively] united to Christ, and so have a [pleadable] title to his benefits.

But still something further is necessary for man, in order to his coming to the actual possession of the inheritance. A man, as soon as he has believed, has a title to the inheritance: but in order to come to the actual possession of it, he must *persevere* in a way of holiness. There is not only a gate that must be entered; but there is a narrow way that must be travelled, before we can arrive at heavenly blessedness; and that is the way of universal and persevering holiness. But men, after they have believed, cannot persevere in a way of holiness, of themselves. But there is sufficient provision made for this also, in the way of salvation by Jesus Christ. The matter of a saint's perseverance is sufficiently secured by the purchase that Christ has made.

But still there is something else needful in order to qualify a person for the actual entering upon the enjoyments and employments of a glorified estate, viz., that he should be made *perfectly holy;* that all remainders of sin should be taken away; for there cannot any sin enter into heaven. No soul must go into the glorious presence of God, with the least degree of the filth of sin. But there is provision made: for Christ has purchased that all sin shall be taken away out of the hearts of believers at death; and that they should be made perfectly holy: whereby they shall be fully and perfectly qualified to enter upon the pleasures and enjoyments of the new Jerusalem.

Christ has purchased all, both objective and inherent good: not only a portion to be enjoyed by us; but all those inherent qualifications necessary to our enjoyment of it. He has purchased not only justification, but sanctification and glorification; both holiness and happiness.—Having considered the good attained in the way of salvation as *manifold* and various, I now proceed, as proposed,

II. To consider the good attained for us by this way of salvation, as *exceeding great.*

There is not only every sort of good we need, but of every sort in *that degree*, so as to answer the extent of our capacity, and the greatest stretch of our desires, and indeed of our conceptions. They are not only greater than our conceptions are here, but also greater than ever they could be, were it not that God's relation, and our own experience, will teach us. They are greater than the tongue of angels can declare, the *deliverance* that we have in it is exceeding great; it is deliverance from guilt, from sin itself, from the anger of God, and from the miseries of hell.

How great is the *good conferred!* The objective good is the infinite God, and the glorious Redeemer, Jesus Christ. How great is the love of the Father, and the Son! And how near the relation between them and the true believer! How close the union, how intimate the communion, and ultimately how clear will be the vision in glory!

There are great *communications* made to the believing soul on earth, but how much greater in heaven! Then their conformity to God will be perfect, their enjoyment of him will be full, their honor great and unsullied, and the glory of body and soul ineffable. The riches of the Christian are immense; all things are included in his treasure. Pleasures unspeakably and inconceivably great await him; rivers of delight, fulness of joy; and all of infinite duration!

The benefit procured for us, is *doubly* infinite. Our deliverance is an infinite benefit, because the evil we are delivered from is infinite; and the positive good bestowed is eternal; viz., the full enjoyment of all those blessings merited.

SECTION IV.

How angels are benefited by the salvation of men.

So hath the wisdom of God contrived this affair, that the benefit of what he has done therein should be so extensive, as to reach the elect angels. It is for men that the work of redemption is wrought out; and yet the benefit of the things done in this work is not confined to them, though all that is properly called *redemption*, or included in it, is confined to men. The angels cannot partake in this, having never fallen; yet they have great indirect benefit by it.—God hath so wisely ordered, that what has been done in this directly and especially for men, should redound to the exceeding benefit of all intelligent creatures who are in favor with God. The benefit of it is so diffusive as to reach heaven itself. So great and manifold is the good attained in this work, that those glorious spirits who are so much above us, and were so highly exalted in happiness before, yet should receive great addition hereby.—I will show *how* in some particulars.

1. The angels hereby see a great and wonderful manifestation of the glory of God. The happiness of angels as well as of men consists very much in beholding the glory of God. The excellency of the Divine Being is a most delightful subject of contemplation to the saints on earth; but much more to the angels in heaven. The more holy any being is, the more sweet and delightful will it be to him to behold the glory and beauty of the Supreme Being.—Therefore the beholding of the glory of God must be ravishing to the holy angels, who are perfect in holiness, and never had their minds leavened with sin. The manifestations of the glory of God, are as it were the food that satisfies the angels; they live thereon. It is their greatest happiness.

It is without doubt much of their employment to behold the glory of God appearing in his works. Therefore this work of redemption greatly contributes to their happiness and delight, as the glory of God is so exceedingly manifested

by it. For what is done, is done in the sight of the angels, as is evident by many passages of Holy Scripture. And they behold the glory of God appearing herein with entertainment and delight, as it is manifest by 1 Pet. i. 12: "Which things the angels desire to look into."

The angels have this advantage, that now they may behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, where it shines with a peculiar lustre and brightness. 1 Tim. iii. 16, "Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels." Perhaps all God's attributes are more gloriously manifested in this work, than in any other that ever the angels saw. There is certainly a fuller manifestation of some of his attributes, than ever they saw before; as is evident by the text. And especially, it is so with respect to the mercy of God, that sweet and endearing attribute of the divine nature. The angels of heaven never saw so much grace manifested before, as in the work of redemption; nor in any measure equal to it. How full of joy doth it fill the hearts of the angels, to see such a boundless and bottomless ocean of love and grace in their God! And therefore with what rejoicing do all the angels praise Christ for his being slain! Rev. v. 11, 12, "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing."

2. They have this benefit by it, that hereby Jesus Christ, God-man, is become their head. God, subsisting in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, was the King of angels, and would have been, if it had not been for our redemption. But it was owing to what is done in this work, that Jesus Christ, as God-man, becomes the head of the angels. Christ is now not only the head of angels simply as God, but as God-man. Col. ii. 10, "And ye are complete in him, who is the head of all principality and power." Eph. i. 20—22, "Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him on his own right hand in heavenly places, far above all principality and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church."

This is a part of the exaltation and glory of Christ which God confers on him as his reward. And not only so, but it is greatly to the angels' benefit. It is God's manner in his dealings with his elect creatures, in the same works wherein he glorifies himself, or his Son, greatly to benefit them. The same dealings of his that are most for his glory, shall be most for their good. —That Christ, God-man, should be made the head of the angels, is greatly to their benefit several ways.

(1.) Because they become hereby more nearly *related* to so glorious a person, the Son of God, than otherwise they would have. The angels esteem it a great honor done them to be related to such a person as Jesus Christ, God-man, who is an infinitely honorable person.

The angels, by Christ becoming their head, are with the saints gathered together in one in Christ, Eph. i. 10. They, by virtue hereof, though Christ be not their Redeemer as he is ours, have a right and propriety in this glorious person, as well as we. He is theirs; though not their Saviour, yet he is their head of government, and head of influence.

(2.) Again, this is greatly to their *benefit;* as they are under advantages for a far more intimate converse with God. The divine nature is at an infinite

distance from the nature of angels, as well as from the nature of man. This distance forbids a familiarity and intimacy of intercourse.—It is therefore a great advantage to the angels, that God is come down to them in a created nature; and in that nature is become their head; so that their intercourse and enjoyment may be more intimate. They are invited by the similar qualifications of the created nature, with which the Son of God is invested.

(3.) It is for the benefit of the angels, as hereby the elect of mankind are gathered into their society. Christ, by the work of redemption, gathers in the elect of mankind to join the angels of heaven. Eph. i. 10, "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him." Men are brought in to join with the angels in their work of praising God; to partake with them of their enjoyments. The angels greatly rejoice at this. They rejoice when but one person is gathered in, as Christ teaches us, Luke xv. 10: "Likewise I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." The heavenly society is made more complete by this accession of the saints to it; they contribute to the happiness of each other. The angels rejoice that others are added to join them and assist them in praising God.—And thus the vacancy by the fall of angels is filled up.

(4.) It tends to make the angels to prize their happiness the more, when they see how much it cost to purchase the same happiness for man. Though they knew so much, yet they are not incapable of being taught more and more the worth of their own happiness. For when they saw how much it cost to purchase the same happiness for man; even the precious blood of the Son of God; this tended to give them a great sense of the infinite value of their happiness. They never saw such a testimony of the value of the eternal enjoyment of God before.

Thus we have shown, how the wisdom of God appears in the work of redemption in the good ends attained thereby, with respect to God, men, and good angels.

But are there any good ends obtained with respect to *bad* angels, God's grand enemies? Undoubtedly there are, as may appear from the few following considerations. Satan and his angels rebelled against God in heaven, and proudly presumed to try their strength with his. And when God by his almighty power overcame the strength of Satan, and sent him like lightning from heaven to hell with all his army, Satan still hoped to get the victory by subtlety. Though he could not overcome by power, yet he hoped to succeed by craft; and so by his subtlety to disappoint God of his end in creating this lower world. —God therefore has shown his great wisdom in overthrowing Satan's design. He has disappointed the devices of the crafty, so that they cannot perform their enterprise; he has carried their counsel headlong.

1. Satan thought to have disappointed God of his glory, which he designed in creating this lower world; and to make mankind be for his own glory, in setting up himself god over them. Now Christ, by what he has done in the work of redemption, has overthrown Satan; and utterly frustrated him as to this end. God is exceedingly glorified in the elect, to the surprise of angels and devils. God by redemption has all the glory that he intended, and more than either men, angels, or devils imagined that God intended. God might have glorified his justice in the destruction of all mankind. But it was God's design in creating the world, to glorify his goodness and love; and not only to be glorified eventually, but to be served and glorified actually by men. Satan intended to frustrate God of this end; but, by the redemption of Jesus Christ, his design is confounded

2. Another design of the devil, was to gratify his envy in the utter destruction of mankind. But, by the redemption of Jesus Christ, this malicious design of Satan is crossed: because all the elect are brought to their designed happiness; which is much greater than ever Satan thought it was in God's heart to bestow on man. And though some of mankind are left to be miserable, yet that does not answer Satan's end; for this also is ordered for God's glory. No more are left miserable than God saw meet to glorify his justice upon.

One end why God suffered Satan to do what he did in procuring the fall of man, was that his Son might be glorified in conquering that strong, subtle, and proud spirit, and triumphing over him. How glorious doth Christ Jesus appear in baffling and triumphing over this proud king of darkness, and all the haughty confederate rulers of hell! How glorious a sight is it to see the meek and patient Lamb of God leading that proud, malicious, and mighty enemy in triumph! What songs doth this cause in heaven! It was a glorious sight in Israel to see David carrying the head of Goliath in triumph to Jerusalem. It appeared glorious to the daughters of Israel, who came out with timbrels and with dances, and sang, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." But how much more glorious to see the Son of David, the Son of God, carrying the head of the spiritual Goliath, the champion of the armies of hell, in triumph to the heavenly Jerusalem! It is with a principal view to this, that Christ is called, "the Lord of hosts, or armies, and a man of war," Exod. xv. 3. And Psal. xxiv. 8, "Who is this king of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle."

SECTION V.

In this way of salvation wonderful glory redounds to God, as the effect of divine wisdom.

1. By this contrivance for our redemption, God's greatest dishonor is made an *occasion* of his greatest glory. Sin is a thing by which God is greatly dishonored; the nature of its principle is enmity against God, and contempt of him. And man, by his rebellion, has greatly dishonored God. But this dishonor, by the contrivance of our redemption, is made an occasion of the greatest manifestation of God's glory that ever was. Sin, the greatest evil, is made an occasion of the greatest good. It is the nature of a principle of sin that it seeks to dethrone God: but this is hereby made an occasion of the greatest manifestation of God's royal majesty and glory that ever was. By sin, man has slighted and despised God: but this is made an occasion of his appearing the more greatly honorable. Sin casts contempt upon the authority and law of God: but this, by the contrivance of our redemption, is made the occasion of the greatest honor done to that same authority, and to that very law. It was a greater honor to the law of God that Christ was subject to it, and obeyed it, than if all mankind had obeyed it. It was a greater honor to God's authority that Christ showed such great respect, and such entire subjection to it, than the perfect obedience of all the angels in heaven. Man by his sin showed his enmity against the holiness of God; but this is made an occasion of the greatest manifestation of God's holiness. The holiness of God never appeared to so great a degree, as when God executed vengeance upon his own dear Son.

2. So has the wisdom of God contrived that those attributes are glorified in man's salvation, whose glory seemed to require his *destruction*. When man had fallen, several attributes of God seemed to require his destruction. The justice of God requires, that sin be punished as it deserves: but it deserves no less

than eternal destruction. God proclaims it as a part of the glory of his nature, that he will in no wise clear the guilty, Exod. xxxiv. 7. The holiness of God seemed to require man's destruction; for God by his holiness infinitely hates sin. This seemed to require therefore that God should manifest a proportionable hatred of the sinner; and that he should be for ever an enemy unto him. The truth of God seemed also to require man's destruction; for eternal death was what God had threatened for sin, one jot or tittle of which threatening cannot by any means pass away. But yet so has God contrived, that those very attributes not only allow of man's redemption, and are not inconsistent with it, but they are glorified in it. Even vindictive justice is glorified in the death and sufferings of Christ. The holiness of God, or his holy hatred of sin, that seemed to require man's damnation, is seen in Christ's dying for sinners. So herein also is manifested and glorified the truth of God, in the threatenings of the law.

3. Yea, it is so ordered now that the glory of these attributes *requires* the salvation of those that believe. The justice of God that required man's damnation, and seemed inconsistent with his salvation, now as much requires the salvation of those that believe in Christ, as ever before it required their damnation. Salvation is an absolute debt to the believer from God, so that he may in justice demand it, on account of what his surety has done. For Christ has satisfied justice fully for his sin; so that it is but a thing that may be challenged, that God should now release the believer from the punishment; it is but a piece of justice, that the creditor should release the debtor, when he has fully paid the debt. And again, the believer may demand eternal life, because it has been merited by Christ, by a merit of condignity. So is it contrived, that that justice that seemed to require man's destruction, now requires his salvation.

So the truth of God that seemed to require man's damnation, now requires his salvation. At the same time that the threatening of the law stands good, there is a promise of eternal life to many who have broken the law. They both stand good at the same time; and the truth of God requires that both should be fulfilled. How much soever they seem to clash, yet so is the matter contrived in this way of salvation, that both are fulfilled, and do not interfere one with another.

At the very time that God uttered the threatening, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die;" and at the time that Adam had first eaten the forbidden fruit; there was then an existing promise, that many thousands of Adam's race should obtain eternal life. This promise was made to Jesus Christ, before the world was. What a difficulty and inconsistence did there seem to be here? But it was no difficulty to the wisdom of God, that the promise and the threatening should be both fully accomplished to the glory of God's truth in each of them. Psal. lxxxv. 10, "Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other."

4. Those very attributes which seemed to require man's destruction, are *more glorious* in his salvation, than they would have been in his destruction. The revenging justice of God is a great deal more *manifested* in the death of Christ, than it would have been if all mankind had been sufferers to all eternity. If man had remained under the guilt and imputation of sin, the justice of God would not have had such a *trial*, as it had, when his own Son was under the imputation of sin. If all mankind had stood guilty, and justice had called for vengeance upon them, that would not have been such a trial of the inflexibleness and unchangeableness of the justice of God, as when his own Son, who was the object of his infinite love, and in whom he infinitely delighted, stood with the imputation of guilt upon him.

This was the greatest trial that could be, to manifest whether God's justice was perfect and unchangeable, or not; whether God was so just that he would not upon any account abate of what justice required; and whether God would have any respect to persons in judgment.

So the *majesty* of God appears much more in the sufferings of Christ than it would have done in the eternal sufferings of all mankind. The majesty of a prince appears greater in the just punishment of great personages under the guilt of treason, than of inferior persons. The sufferings of Christ have this advantage over the eternal sufferings of the wicked, for impressing upon the minds of the spectators a sense of the dread majesty of God, and his infinite hatred of sin; viz., that the eternal sufferings of the wicked never will be seen actually accomplished, and finished; whereas they have seen that which is equivalent to those eternal sufferings actually fulfilled and finished in the sufferings of Christ.

5. Such is the wisdom of this way of salvation, that the more any of the elect have dishonored God, the more is God glorified in this redemption. Such wonders as these are accomplished by the wisdom of this way of salvation. Such things as these, if they had been proposed to any created intelligence, would have seemed strange and unaccountable paradoxes, till the counsels of divine wisdom concerning the matter were unfolded.

So sufficient is this way of salvation, that it is not inconsistent with any of God's attributes to save the chief of sinners. However great a sinner any one has been, yet God can, if he pleases, save without any injury to the glory of any one attribute. And not only so, but the more sinful any one has been, the more doth God glorify himself in his salvation. The more doth he glorify his power, that he can redeem one in whom sin so abounds, and of whom Satan hath such strong possession.—The greater triumph has Christ over his grand adversary, in redeeming and setting at liberty from his bondage those that were his greatest vassals. The more doth the sufficiency of Christ appear, in that it is sufficient for such vile wretches.

The more is the sovereignty and boundless extent of the mercy of God manifested, in that it is sufficient to redeem those that are most undeserving. Rom. v. 20, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

SECTION VI.

How the wisdom of God appears in the manner and circumstances of obtaining the good intended.

We now come to take notice of some wonderful circumstances of the attainment of our good, hereby; which shows the great wisdom of this contrivance.

1. So hath God contrived in this way, that a sinful creature should become not guilty; and that he who has no righteousness of his own, should become righteous. These things, if they had been proposed, would have appeared contradictions to any but the divine understanding.

If it had been proposed to any created intelligence, to find out a way in which a *sinful* creature should not be a *guilty* creature, how impossible would it have been judged, that there should be any way at all. It would doubtless have been judged impossible but that he who has committed sin, must stand guilty of the sin he has committed; and if sin necessarily obliges to punishment, it must oblige him who has committed it. If punishment and sin be inseparable, then that punishment and the sinner are inseparable. If the law denounces

death to the person who is guilty of sin, and if it be impossible that the law should not take place, then he who has committed sin must die. Thus any created understanding would have thought.

And if it had been proposed, that there should be some way found out, wherein man might be righteous without fulfilling righteousness himself; so that he might reasonably and properly be looked upon and accepted as a righteous person, and adjudged to the reward of righteousness, and yet have no righteousness of his own, but the contrary—that he should be righteous by the righteousness of the law, by a perfect righteousness, and yet have broken the law, and done nothing else but break it—this doubtless would have been looked upon as impossible and contradictious.

But yet the wisdom of God has truly accomplished each of these things. He hath accomplished that men, though sinners, should be without guilt, in that he hath found out a way that the threatenings of the law should truly and properly be fulfilled, and punishment be executed on sin, and yet not on the sinner. The sufferings of Christ answer the demands of the law, with respect to the sins of those who believe in him; and justice is truly satisfied thereby. And the law is fulfilled and answered by the obedience of Christ, so that his righteousness should properly be our righteousness. Though not performed by us, yet it is properly and reasonably accepted for us, as much as if we had performed it ourselves. Divine wisdom has so contrived, that such an interchanging of sin and righteousness should be consistent, and most agreeable with reason, with the law, and God's holy attributes. For Jesus Christ has so united himself to us, and us to him, as to make himself ours, our head. The love of Christ to the elect is so great, that God the Father looks upon it proper and suitable to account Christ and the elect as one; and accordingly to account what Christ does and suffers, as if they *did* and *suffered* it.—That love of Christ which is so great as to render him willing to put himself in the stead of the elect, and to bear the misery that they deserved, does, in the Father's account, so unite Christ and the elect, that they may be looked upon as legally one.

2. It shows wonderful wisdom that our good should be procured by such seemingly unlikely and opposite means, as the humiliation of the Son of God. When Christ was about to undertake that great work of redemption, he did not take that method that any creature-wisdom would have thought the most proper. Creature-wisdom would have determined that in order to his effectually and more gloriously accomplishing such a great work, he should rather have been exalted higher, if it had been possible, rather than humbled so low.—Earthly kings and princes, when they are about to engage in any great and difficult work, will put on their strength, and will appear in all their majesty and power, that they may be successful.—But when Christ was about to perform the great work of redeeming a lost world, the wisdom of God took an opposite method, and determined that he should be humbled and abased to a mean state, and appear in low circumstances. He did not deck himself with glory, but laid it aside. He emptied himself. Phil. ii. 6, 7, 8, "Being in the form of God—he made himself of no reputation, and took on him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."—Creature-wisdom would have thought that Christ, in order to perform this great work, should deck himself with all his strength; but divine wisdom determined, that he should be made weak, or put on the infirmities of human nature.

And why did divine wisdom determine that he should become thus weak? It was that he might be subject to want, and to suffering, and to the power and

malice of his enemies. But then what advantage could it be to him in this work, to be subject to the power and malice of his enemies? It was the very design on which he came into the world, to overcome his enemies. Who would have thought that this was the way to overthrow them, that he should become weak and feeble, and for that very end that he might be subject to their power and malice? But this is the very means by which God determined, that Christ should prevail against his enemies, even that he should be subject to their power, that they might prevail against him, so as to put him to disgrace, and pain, and death.

What other but divine wisdom could ever have determined, that this was the way to be taken in order to being successful in the work of our redemption! This would have appeared to creature-wisdom the most direct course to be frustrated that could be devised. But it was indeed the way to glorious success, and the only way. "The foolishness of God is wiser than men," 1 Cor. i. 25. God has brought strength out of weakness, glory out of ignominy and reproach. Christ's shame and reproach are the only means by which a way is made to our eternal honor.

The wisdom of God hath made Christ's humiliation the means of our exaltation; his coming down from heaven is that which brings us to heaven. The wisdom of God hath made life the fruit of death. The death of Christ was the only means by which we could have eternal life. The death of a person who was God, was the only way by which we could come to have life in God.—Here favor is made to arise out of wrath; our acceptance into God's favor out of God's wrath upon his own Son. A blessing rises out of a curse; our everlasting blessedness, from Christ being made a curse for us. Our righteousness is made to rise out of Christ's imputed guilt. He was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God, 2 Cor. v. 21. By such wonderful means hath the wisdom of God procured our salvation.

3. Our sin and misery, by this contrivance, are made an occasion of our greater blessedness. This is a very wonderful thing. It would have been a very wonderful thing if we had been merely restored from sin and misery, to be as we were before; but it was a much more wonderful thing that we should be brought to a higher blessedness than ever; and that our sin and misery should be the occasion of it, and should make way for it.

(1.) It was wonderful that *sin* should be made the occasion of our greater blessedness; for sin deserves misery. By our sin we had deserved to be everlastingly miserable; but this is so turned by divine wisdom, that it is made an occasion of our being more happy.—It was a strange thing that sin should be the occasion of any thing else but misery: but divine wisdom has found out a way whereby the sinner might not only escape being miserable, but that he should be happier than before he sinned; yea, than he would have been if he had never sinned at all. And this sin and unworthiness of his, are the occasion of this greater blessedness.

(2.) It was a wonderful thing that man's own *misery* should be an occasion of his greater happiness. For happiness and misery are contraries; and man's misery was very great. He was under the wrath and curse of God, and condemned to everlasting burnings.—But the sin and misery of man, by this contrivance, are made an occasion of his being more happy, not only than he was before the fall, but than he would have been if he never had fallen.

Our first parents, if they had stood and persevered in perfect obedience, till God had given them the fruit of the tree of life as a seal of their reward, would probably have been advanced to higher happiness: for they before were but in

a state of probation for their reward. And it is not to be supposed but that their happiness was to have been greater after they had persisted in obedience, and had actually received the reward, than it was while they were in a state of trial for it. But by the redemption of Christ, the sin and misery of the elect are made an occasion of their being brought to a higher happiness than mankind would have had if they had persisted in obedience till they had received the reward.—For,

1*st.* Man is hereby brought to a greater and nearer *union* with God. If man had never fallen, God would have remained man's friend; he would have enjoyed God's favor, and so would have been the object of Christ's favor, as he would have had the favor of all the persons of the Trinity.—But now Christ becoming our surety and Saviour, and having taken on him our nature, occasions between Christ and us a union of a quite different kind, and a nearer relation than otherwise would have been. The fall is the occasion of Christ becoming our head, and the church his body. And believers are become his brethren, and spouse, in a manner that otherwise would not have been. And by our union with Christ we have a greater union with God the Father. We are sons by virtue of our union with the natural Son of God. Gal. iv. 4—6, "When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." And therefore Christ has taught us, in all our addresses to God, to call him our Father, in like manner as he calls him Father: John xx. 17, "Go tell my brethren, behold I ascend to my Father, and your Father."

This is one of the wonderful things brought about by the work of redemption, that thereby our separation from God, is made an occasion of a greater union than was before, or otherwise would have been.—When we fell, there was a dreadful separation made betwixt God and us, but this is made an occasion of a greater union. John xvii. 20—23, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one."

2*dly.* Man now has greater *manifestations* of the *glory* and *love* of God, than otherwise he would have had. In the manifestations of these two things, man's happiness principally consists. Now, man by the work of redemption, has greater manifestation of both, than otherwise he would have had. We have already spoken particularly of the glory of God, and what advantages even the angels have by the discoveries of it in this work; but if *they* have such advantages, much more will *man*, who is far more directly concerned in this affair than they.—Here are immediately greater displays of the love of God, than man had before he fell; or, as we may well suppose, than he would have had, if he had never fallen. God now manifests his love to his people, by sending his Son into the world, to die for them. There never would have been any such testimony of the love of God, if man had not fallen.

Christ manifests his love, by coming into the world, and laying down his life. This is the greatest testimony of divine love that can be conceived. Now, surely, the greater discoveries God's people have of his love to them, the more occasion will they have to rejoice in that love. Here will be a delightful theme for the saints to contemplate to all eternity which they never could have had, if

man never had fallen, viz., the dying love of Christ. They will have occasion now to sing that song for ever, Rev. i. 5, 6, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to whom be glory and dominion for ever. Amen.

3*dly*. Man now has greater *motives* offered him to love God than otherwise he would have had. Man's happiness consists in mutual love between God and man; in seeing God's love to him, and in reciprocally loving God. And the more he sees of God's love to him, and the more he loves God, the more happy must he be. His love to God is as necessary in order to his happiness, as the seeing of God's love to him; for he can have no joy in beholding God's love to him, any otherwise than as he loves God.—This makes the saints prize God's love to them; for *they love him*. If they did not love God, to see his love to them would not make them happy. But the more any person loves another, the more will he be delighted in the manifestations of that other's love. There is provision therefore made for both in the work of redemption. There are greater *manifestations* of the love of God to us, than there would have been if man had not fallen; and also there are greater *motives* to love him than otherwise there would have been. There are greater *obligations* to love him, for God has done more for us to win our love. Christ hath died for us.

Again, man is now brought to a more universal and immediate and *sensible dependence* on God, than otherwise he would have been. All his happiness is now *of* him, *through* him, *in* him. If man had not fallen, he would have had all his happiness of God by his own righteousness; but now it is by the righteousness of Christ. He would have had all his holiness of God, but not so sensibly; because then he would have been holy from the beginning, as soon as he received his being; but now, he is first sinful and universally corrupt, and afterwards is made holy. If man had held his integrity, misery would have been a stranger to him; and therefore happiness would not have been so sensible a derivation from God, as it is now, when man looks to God from the deeps of distress, cries repeatedly to him, and waits upon him. He is convinced by abundant experience, that he has no place of resort but God, who is graciously pleased, in consequence of man's earnest and persevering suit, to appear to his relief, to take him out of the miry clay and horrible pit, set him upon a rock, establish his goings, and put a new song into his mouth. By man's having thus a more immediate, universal, and sensible dependence, God doth more entirely secure man's undivided respect. There is a greater motive for man to make God his all in all,—to love him, and rejoice in him, as his only portion.

4*thly*. By the contrivance for our salvation, man's sin and misery are but an occasion of his being brought to a more full and free *converse* with and *enjoyment* of God than otherwise would have been. For as we have observed already, the union is greater; and the greater the union, the more full the communion, and intimate the intercourse.—Christ is come down to man in his own nature; and hereby he may converse with Christ more intimately, than the infinite distance of the divine nature would allow. This advantage is more than wha. the angels have. For Christ is not only in a *created* nature, but he *is in man's own nature*.--We have also advantages for a more full *enjoyment* of God. By Christ's incarnation, the saints may see God with their bodily eyes, as well as by an intellectual view. The saints, after the day of judgment, will consist of both body and soul; they will have outward as well as spiritual sight. It is now ordered by divine wisdom, that God himself, or a divine person, should be the principal entertainment of both these kinds of sight, spiritual and corporeal: and the saints in heaven shall not only have an intellectual sight of God,

but they shall see a divine person as they see one another; not only spiritually, but outwardly.—The body of Jesus Christ will appear with that transcendent visible majesty and beauty, which is exceedingly expressive of the divine majesty, beauty, and glory. The body of Christ shall appear with the glory of God upon it, as Christ tells us, Matt. xvi. 27: "The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father." Thus to see God will be a great happiness to the saints. Job comforted himself that he should see God with his bodily eyes, Job xix. 26: "And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God."

5thly. Man's sin and misery is made an occasion of his greater happiness, as he has now a greater relish of happiness, by reason of his knowlege of both. In order to happiness, there must be two things, viz., union to a proper object—and a relish of the object. Man's misery is made an occasion of increasing both these by the work of redemption. We have shown already, that the union is increased; and so is the relish too, by the knowledge man now has of evil. These contraries, good and evil, heighten the sense of one another. The forbidden tree was called the tree of knowledge of good and evil; of *evil*, because by it we came to the experience of evil; of *good*, because we should never have known so well what good was, if it had not been for that tree. We are taught the value of good, by our knowledge of its contrary, evil. This teaches us to prize good, and makes us the more to relish and rejoice in it. The saints know something what a state of sin and alienation from God is. They know something what the anger of God is, and what it is to be in danger of hell. And this makes them the more exceedingly to rejoice in the favor and in the enjoyment of God.

Take two persons; one who never knew what evil was, but was happy from the first moment of his being, having the favor of God, and numerous tokens of it; another who is in a very doleful and undone condition. Let there be bestowed upon these two persons the same blessings [subjectively], the same good things; and let them be objectively in the same glorious circumstances,—and which will rejoice most? Doubtless he that was brought to this happiness out of a miserable and doleful state. So the saints in heaven will for ever the more rejoice in God, and in the enjoyment of his love, for their being brought to it out of a most lamentable state and condition.

SECTION VII.

Some wonderful circumstances of the overthrow of Satan.

The wisdom of God greatly and remarkably appears in so exceedingly baffling and confounding all the subtlety of the old serpent. Power never appears so conspicuous as when opposed, and conquering opposition. The same may be said of wisdom; it never appears so brightly, and with such advantage as when opposed by the subtlety of some very crafty enemy; and in baffling and confounding that subtlety.—The devil is exceeding subtle. The subtlety of the serpent is emblematical of his, Gen. iii. 1. He was once one of the bright intelligences of heaven, and one of the brightest, if not the very brightest of all. And all the devils were once morning stars, of a glorious brightness of understanding. They still have the same faculties, though they ceased to be influenced and guided by the Holy Spirit of God; and so their heavenly wisdom is turned into hellish craft and subtlety.—God in the work of redemption hath wondrously baffled the utmost craft of the devils, and though they are all combined to frustrate God's designs of glory to himself, and goodness to men.—The wisdom of God appears very glorious herein. For,

1. Consider the weak and seemingly despicable means and weapons that God employs to overthrow Satan. Christ poured the greater contempt upon Satan in the victory that he obtained over him, by reason of the means of his preparing himself for it, and the weapons he hath used. Christ chooses to encounter Satan in the human nature, in a poor, frail, afflicted state. He did as David did. David when going against the Philistine refused Saul's armor, a helmet of brass, a coat of mail, and his sword. No, he puts them all off. Goliath comes mightily armed against David, with a helmet of brass upon his head, a coat of mail weighing five thousand shekels of brass, greaves of brass upon his legs, and a target of brass between his shoulders; a spear, whose staff was like a weaver's beam; and the spear's head weighing six hundred shekels of iron. And besides all this, he had one bearing a shield before him. But David takes nothing but a staff in his hand, and a shepherd's bag and a sling; and he goes against the Philistine. So the weapons that Christ made use of were his poverty, afflictions and reproaches, sufferings and death. His principal weapon was his cross: the instrument of his own reproachful death. These were seemingly weak and despicable instruments, to wield against such a giant as Satan. And doubtless the devil disdained them as much as Goliath did David's staves and sling. But with such weapons as these has Christ, in a human, weak, mortal nature, overthrown and baffled all the craft of hell.

Such disgrace and contempt has Christ poured upon Satan. David had a more glorious victory over Goliath for his conquering him with such mean instruments; and Samson over the Philistines, for killing so many of them with such a despicable weapon as the jaw-bone of an ass. It is spoken of in Scripture as a glorious triumph of Christ over the devil, that he should overcome him by such a despicable weapon as his cross. Col. ii. 14, 15, "Blotting out the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross: and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it."—God shows his great and infinite wisdom in taking this method, to confound the wisdom and subtlety of his enemies. He hereby shows how easily he can do it, and that he is infinitely wiser than they. 1 Cor. i. 27, 28, "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things that are mighty: and the base things of the world, and things that are despised, hath God chosen; yea, and things that are not, to bring to nought things that are."

2. God has hereby confounded Satan with his own weapons. It is so contrived in the work of redemption, that our grand enemy should be made a means of his own confusion; and that, by those very things whereby he endeavors to rob God of his glory, and to destroy mankind, he is made an instrument of frustrating his own designs. His most subtle and powerful endeavors for accomplishing his designs are made a means of confounding them, and of promoting the contrary. Of this, I will mention but two instances. *First.* His procuring man's fall is made an occasion of the contrary to what he designed. Indeed he has hereby procured the ruin of multitudes of mankind, which he aimed at. But in this he does not frustrate God's design from all eternity to glorify himself; and the misery of multitudes of mankind will prove no content to him, but will enhance his own misery.

What Satan did in tempting man to fall, is made an occasion of the contrary to what he intended, in that it gave occasion for God to glorify himself the more; and giveth occasion for the elect being brought to higher happiness

The happy state of man was envied by Satan. That man who was of

earthly original should be advanced to such honors, when he who was originally of a so much more noble nature should be cast down to such disgrace, his pride could not bear. How then would Satan triumph, when he had brought him down!

The devil tempted our first parents with this, that if they would eat of the forbidden fruit, they should be as gods.—It was a lie in Satan's mouth; for he aimed at nothing else but to fool man out of his happiness, and make him his own slave and vassal, with a blinded expectation of being like a god.—But little did Satan think that God would turn it so, as to make man's fall an occasion of God's becoming man; and so an occasion of our nature being advanced to a state of closer union to God.

By this means it comes to pass, that one in man's nature now sits at the right hand of God, invested with divine power and glory, and reigns over heaven and earth with a God-like power and dominion. Thus is Satan disappointed in his subtlety. As he intended that saying, *Ye shall be as gods*, it was a lie, to decoy and befool man. Little did he think, that it would be in such manner verified by the incarnation of the Son of God. And this is the occasion also of all the elect being united to this divine person, so that they become one with Christ. Believers are as members and parts of Christ. Yea, the church is called Christ. Little did Satan think, that his telling that lie to our first parents, "Ye shall be as gods," would be the occasion of their being members of Christ the Son of God.

Again, Satan is made a means of his own confusion in this:—It was Satan's design, in tempting man to sin, to make man his captive and slave forever; to have plagued, and triumphed over him. And this very thing is a means to bring it about, that man instead of being his vassal should be his judge. The elect, instead of being his captives, to be forever tormented and triumphed over by him, shall sit as judges to sentence him to everlasting torment. It has been the means, that one in man's nature, should be his supreme Judge. It was man's nature that Satan so envied, and sought to make a prey of. But Jesus Christ at the last day shall come in man's nature; and the devils shall be all brought to stand trembling at his bar: and he shall judge, and condemn them, and execute the wrath of God upon them. And not only shall Christ in the human nature judge the devils, but all the saints shall judge them with Christ as assessors with him in judgment: 1 Cor. vi. 3, "Know ye not that we shall judge angels?"

Secondly. In another instance Satan is made a means of his own confusion; that is, in his procuring the death of Christ. Satan set himself to oppose Christ as soon as he appeared.—He sought, by all means, to procure his ruin. He set the Jews against him. He filled the minds of the scribes and Pharisees with the most bitter persecuting malice against Christ. He sought by all means to procure his death; and that he might be put to the most ignominious death We read "that Satan entered into Judas, and tempted him to betray him," Luke xxii. 3. And Christ speaks of his sufferings as being the effects of the power of darkness, Luke xxii. 53: "When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour and the power of darkness."—But Satan hereby overthrows his own kingdom. Christ came into the world to destroy the works of the devil. And this was the very thing that did it, viz., the blood and death of Christ. The cross was the devil's own weapon; and with this weapon he was overthrown: as David cut off Goliath's head with his own sword.

Christ thus making Satan a means of his own confusion was typified of old

by Samson's getting honey out of the carcass of the lion. There is more implied in Samson's riddle, "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness," than ever the Philistines explained. It was verified by Christ in a far more glorious manner. God's enemies and ours are taken in the pit which they themselves have digged: and their own soul is taken in the net which they have laid. Thus we have shown, in some measure, the wisdom of this way of salvation by Jesus Christ.

SECTION VIII.

The superiority of this wisdom to that of the angels.

The wisdom of this contrivance appears to have been above the wisdom of the angels by the following things.

1. It appears that the angels did not fully comprehend the contrivance, till they saw it accomplished. They knew that man was to be redeemed, long before Christ came into the world: but yet they did not fully comprehend it until they saw it. This is evident by the expression in the text, *That now might be known unto the principalities—the manifold wisdom of God;* i. e., Now the work is actually accomplished by Jesus Christ. Which implies that it was now new to them.—If they understood no more of it now, than they had all along, the apostle would have expressed himself so; for he is speaking of it as a mystery, in a measure kept hid until now.

Now it is to be considered, that the angels had four thousand years to contemplate this affair; and they did not want inclination and desire to understand and look into it, as the Scripture teaches us. They had also a great deal to put them upon an attentive contemplation of it. For when it was made known that God had such a design, it must appear a new and wonderful thing to them. They had seen their fellow-angels destroyed without mercy; and this redeeming of the fallen sinful creature, was quite a new thing. It must needs be astonishing to them, when God had revealed this design of mercy to them presently after the fall; and had given an intimation of it, in saying, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." They knew that God had such a design; for they were, from the beginning, ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to those that were the heirs of salvation.—They were present at the institution of the typical dispensation, that was so full of shadows of gospel truth. Psal. lxix. 17.

The angels contemplating the contrivance of our redemption was typified by the posture of the cherubims over the mercy-seat, which was the lid of the ark. These emblems were made bending down towards the ark and mercy-seat.—This is what the apostle Peter is thought to have some reference to, 1 Peter i. 12. Yet the angels, though for four thousand years they had been studying this contrivance, did not fully comprehend it till they saw it accomplished. This shows that the wisdom of it was far above theirs; for if they could not fully comprehend it after it had been revealed that there was such a design—and after much of it had already been made known in the Old Testament—how much less could they have found it out of themselves?

Consider for what end this wisdom of God was made known unto the angels, viz., that they might admire and prize it. It was made known to them, that they might see how manifold, how great and glorious, it is; that they might see the unspeakable "depths of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God," as the apostle expresses it, Rom. xi. 33.—It was manifested to them that they might see the glory of God in it, and how great and wonderful the mystery

was. 1 Tim. iii. 16, "Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels." Now if the wisdom of it were not far above their own understandings, this would not be shown them for the express purpose that they might admire and praise God for it.

2. It appears to be above the wisdom of the angels, because they are still contemplating it; and endeavoring to see more and more of it. Indeed there is room for their faculties to employ themselves to all eternity. It is evident from 1 Pet. i. 11, 12, that they are still employing themselves in endeavoring to see more and more of God's wisdom appearing in the work of redemption, "Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into." They still desire to look into it, after they have seen it accomplished. They do not so perfectly comprehend all the wisdom that is to be seen in it; but they are contemplating, looking into it, that they may see more and more; but there will still be room enough in this work to employ the angelical understandings.

SECTION IX.

The subject improved.

I. Hence we may learn the blindness of the world, that the wisdom appearing in the work of redemption is no more admired in it. God has revealed this his glorious design and contrivance to the world; sends forth his gospel, and causes it to be preached abroad, in order to declare to the world that his infinite wisdom has been engaged for man's salvation. But how little is it regarded! There are some who have their eyes opened to behold the wondrous things of the gospel, who see the glory of God in, and admire the wisdom of it. But the greater part are wholly blind to it. They see nothing in all this that is any way glorious and wonderful. Though the angels account it worthy of their most engaged and deep contemplation; yet the greater part of men take little notice of it. It is all a dull story and dead letter to many of them. They cannot see any thing in it above the wisdom of men. Yea, the gospel to many seems foolishness.

Though the light that shines in the world be so exceeding glorious, yet how few are there that do see it. The glory of God's wisdom in this work is surpassing the brightness of the sun: but so blind is the world that it sees nothing. It does not know that the Sun of righteousness shines. Thus it has been in all ages, and wherever the gospel has been preached, ministers of the word of God in all ages have had occasion to say, Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? Thus the prophets were sent to many with that errand, Isa. vi. 9, 10: "Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed."

When Christ that glorious prophet came, and more fully revealed the counsels of God concerning our redemption, how many were then blind! how much did Christ complain of them! How blind were the scribes and Pharisees, the most noted sect of men among the Jews for wisdom: they beheld no

glory in that gospel which Christ preached unto them; which gave him occasion to call them fools and blind, Matt. xxiii. 17.—So it was again in the apostles' times. In all places where they preached, some believed, and some believed not, Acts xxviii. 24. "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed," chap. xiii. 48. "The election obtained, but the rest were blinded," Rom. xi. 7. And so it is still in those places where the gospel is preached. There are a few who see the glory of the gospel. God has a small number whose eyes he opens, who are called out of darkness into marvellous light, and who have an understanding to see the wisdom and fitness of the way of life. But how many are there who sit under the preaching of the gospel all their days, yet never see any divine wisdom or glory in it! To their dying day they are unaffected with it. When they hear it, they see nothing to attract their attention, much less excite any admiration. To preach the gospel to them will serve very well to lull them asleep; but produces very little other effect upon them. This shows the exceeding wickedness of the heart of man. How affecting the thought, that infinite wisdom should be set on work, so as to surprise the angels, and to entertain them from age to age;—and that to men, though so plainly set before them, it should appear foolishness! 1 Cor. i. 18, "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness."

II. This is a great confirmation of the truth of the gospel. The gospel stands in no need of external evidences of its truth and divinity. It carries its own light and evidence with it.—There is that in its nature that sufficiently distinguishes it, to those who are spiritually enlightened, from all the effects of human invention. There are evident appearances of the divine perfections; the stamp of divine glory, of which this of the divine wisdom is not the least part.

There is as much in the gospel to show that it is no work of men, as there is in the sun in the firmament. As persons of mature reason who look upon the sun, and consider the nature of it, its wonderful height, its course, its brightness and heat, may know that it is no work of man; so, if the gospel be duly considered, if the true nature of it be seen, it may be known that it is no work of man, and that it must be from God. And if the *wisdom* appearing in the gospel be duly considered, it will be seen as much to excel all human wisdom, as the sun's light excels the light of fires of our own kindling.—The contrivance of our salvation is of such a nature that no one can rationally conclude that man had any hand in it. The nature of the contrivance is such, so out of the way of all human thoughts, so different from all human inventions; so much more sublime, excellent, and worthy, that it does not savor at all of the craft or subtlety of man: it savors of God only.

If any are ready to think man might have found out such a way of salvation for sinners—so honorable to God, to his holiness and authority—they do not well consider the scantiness of human understanding. Mankind were of a poor capacity for any such undertaking; for till the gospel enlightened the world, they had but miserable notions of what was honorable to God. They could have but poor notions of what way would be suitable to the divine perfections; for they were wofully in the dark about these divine perfections themselves, till the gospel came abroad in the world. They had strange notions about a Deity. Most of them thought there were many gods. "They changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things," Rom. i. 23. They attributed vices to God. Even the philosophers, their wisest men, entertained but imperfect notions of the Supreme Being. How then should men find out a way so glorious and honorable to God, and agreeable to his perfections, who had not

wisdom enough to get any tolerable notions of God, till the gospel was revealed to them. They groped in the dark. Their notions showed the infinite insufficiency of man's blind understanding for any such undertaking, as the contriving of a way of salvation every way honorable to God, and suitable to the needs of a fallen creature.

But since the gospel has told what God's counsels are, and how he has contrived a way for our salvation, men are ready to despise it, and foolishly to exalt their own understanding; and to imagine they could have found out as good a way themselves. When, alas! men, of themselves, had no notion of what was honorable to God, and suitable for a Divine Being.—They did not so much as think of the necessity of God's law being answered, and justice satisfied. And if they had, how dreadfully would they have been puzzled to have found out the way how! Who would have thought of a trinity of persons in the Godhead; and that one should sustain the rights of the Godhead; and another should be the Mediator; and another should make application of redemption? Who would have thought of such a thing as three distinct persons, and yet but one God? All the same Being, and yet three persons! Who would have thought of this, in order to have found out a way for satisfying justice? Who would have thought of a way for answering the law that threatened eternal death, without the sinner's suffering eternal death? And who would have thought of any such thing as a divine person *suffering the wrath of God?* And if they had, who would have contrived a way *how* he should suffer, since the divine nature cannot suffer?

Who would have thought of any such thing as God becoming man; two natures and but one person? These things are exceedingly out of the way of human thought and contrivance. It is most unreasonable to think that the world, who, till the gospel enlightened them, were so blind about the nature of God and divine things, should contrive such a way that should prove thus to answer all ends; every way to suit what the case required; most glorious to God, and answerable to all man's necessities. Every thing is so fully provided for, and no absurdity to be found in the whole affair, but all speaking forth the most perfect wisdom. That there should be no infringement upon holiness or justice; nothing dishonorable to the majesty of God; no encouragement to sin, all possible motives to holiness; all manner of happiness provided; and Satan so confounded and entirely overthrown; how truly wonderful!

And if we suppose that all this notwithstanding was the invention of men, whose invention should it be? Who should be pitched upon as the most likely to invent it? It was not the invention of the Jews; for they were the most bitter enemies to it. The wise men among them, when they first heard of it, conceived malice against it, and persecuted all that held this doctrine. It was not the invention of the heathen; for they knew nothing about it, till the apostles preached it to them; and it appeared a very foolish doctrine to the wise men among them. The doctrine of Christ crucified was not only to the Jews a stumbling-block, but also to the Greeks foolishness, 1 Cor. i. 23. Besides, it was contrary to all their notions about a Deity, and they knew nothing about the fall of man, and the like, till the gospel revealed it to them.

It was not the invention of the apostles; for the apostles, of themselves, were no way capable of any such learned contrivance. They were poor fishermen and publicans, an obscure and illiterate sort of men, till they were extraordinarily taught. They were all surprised when they first heard of it. When they heard that Christ must die for sinners, they were offended at it; and it was a long while before they were brought fully to receive it.

There is but one way left; and that is, to suppose, that Christ was a mere man, a very subtle crafty man, and that he invented it all: but this is as unreasonable as the rest; for it would have been all against himself, to invent a way of salvation by his own crucifixion, a most tormenting and ignominious death.

III. How great a sin they are guilty of who despise and reject this way of salvation! When God has manifested such unsearchable riches of wisdom; when all the persons of the Trinity have as it were held a consultation from all eternity in providing a way of salvation for us sinful, miserable worms;—a way that should be sufficient and every way suitable for us;—a way that should be in all things complete, whereby we might have not only full pardon of all our sins, and deliverance from hell; but also full blessedness in heaven forever:—how must God needs be provoked, when, after all, men reject this way of salvation!

When salvation comes to be preached, and is offered to them in this way; when they are invited to accept of its benefits, and yet they despise and refuse it; they thus practically deny it to be a wise way, and call this wisdom of God foolishness.—How provoking it must be, when such a poor creature as man shall rise up, and find fault with that wisdom which is so far above the wisdom of angels! This is one thing wherein consists the heinousness of the sin of unbelief, and it implies a rejecting and despising of divine wisdom in the way of salvation by Jesus Christ.—Unbelief finds fault with the wisdom of God in the choice of the person, for performing this work. It dislikes the person of Christ. It sees no form nor comeliness in him, nor beauty wherefore it should desire him.

That person whom the wisdom of God looked upon as the fittest person of any, the *only* fit person, is despised and rejected by unbelief.—Men, through unbelief, find fault with the salvation itself that Christ has purchased; they do not like to be saved as Christ would save. They do not like to be made holy, and to have such a happiness as is to be had in God for a portion.

It may not be amiss here to mention two or three ways whereby persons are guilty of a provoking contempt of the wisdom of God in the way of salvation.

1. They are guilty of a provoking contempt, who live in a *careless neglect* of their salvation; they who are secure in their sins, and are not much concerned about either salvation or damnation. This is practically charging God with folly.—Its language is, that all is in vain, and to no purpose; that God hath contrived and consulted for our salvation, when there was no need of it. They are well enough as they are. They do not see any great necessity of a Saviour. They like that state they are in, and do not much desire to be delivered out of it.—They do not thank him for all his consultation and contrivance, and think he might have spared his cost. God has greatly minded that, which they do not think worth minding; and has contrived abundantly for that which they do not trouble their heads about.

2. They are guilty of a provoking contempt of the wisdom of this way of salvation, who go about to *contrive ways of their own*. They who are not content with salvation by the righteousness of Christ, which God has provided, are for contriving some way of being saved by their own righteousness.—These find fault with the wisdom of God's way, and set up their own wisdom in opposition to it. How greatly must God be provoked by such conduct!

3. Those that entertain discouraged and *despairing apprehensions* about their salvation, cast contempt on the wisdom of God. They think that because they have been such great sinners, God will not be willing to pardon them; Christ will not be willing to accept of them. They fear that Christ, in the in-

vitations of the gospel, does not mean such wicked creatures as they are; that because they have committed so much sin, they have sinned beyond the reach of mercy. They think it is in vain for them to seek for salvation.—These cast contempt on the wisdom of God in the way of salvation, as though it were not all-sufficient;—as though the wisdom of God had not found out a way that was sufficient for the salvation of great sinners.

SECTION X.

The misery of unbelievers.

Unbelievers have no portion in this matter. There is a most glorious way of salvation, but you, who are unbelievers, have no interest in it. The wisdom of God hath been gloriously employed for the deliverance of men from a miserable, doleful state; but you are never the better for it, because you reject it. If you continue in that state, this wisdom will do you no good.

Christ is a glorious person; every way fit to be a Saviour of sinners; a person who has power sufficient, wisdom sufficient, merit sufficient, and love sufficient for perfecting this work. And he is the *only* fit person; but you have no right in him; you can lay claim to no benefit by his power, wisdom, love, or merits.—This wisdom of God hath found out a way whereby this Saviour might satisfy justice, and fulfil the law for us: a way whereby he might be capable of suffering for us: but you have no lot in the incarnation, death, and sufferings of Jesus Christ.

The wisdom of God hath contrived a way of salvation that there should be procured for us perfect and everlasting happiness. Here is that happiness procured which is most suitable to our nature, and answerable to the salvation of our souls. Here is a most glorious portion, viz., the Divine Being himself, with his glorious perfections. Here it is purchased, that we should see God face to face;—that we should converse and dwell with God in his own glorious habitation;—that we should be the children of God, and be conformed to him.—Here are the highest honors, the most abundant riches, the most substantial satisfying pleasures for evermore.—Here we have prepared all needed good, both for the souls and bodies of sinners: all needed earthly good things, while here; and glory, for both body and soul hereafter, forever.

But you are never the better for all this. You have no lot nor portion in any of it. Notwithstanding all this rich provision, you may remain in the same miserable state and condition, in which you came into the world. Though the provision of the gospel be so full, yet your poor soul remains in a famishing, perishing state. You remain dead in trespasses and sins; under the dominion of Satan; in a condemned state, having the wrath of God abiding on you, and being daily exposed to the dreadful effects of it in hell. Notwithstanding all this provision, you remain wretched and miserable, poor and blind and naked. O that you might turn to God through Jesus Christ, be numbered among his disciples and faithful followers, and so be entitled to their privileges! They have an interest in this glorious Saviour, and are entitled to all the ineffable blessedness of his kingdom, so far as their capacities will admit: but you remain without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenant of promise, having no well-grounded hope, and without God in the world.—Further consider a few things.

First. It argues the *great misery* of sinners, that the wisdom of God should be exercised to such a degree in order to find out a way to deliver them from it. Their case surely was most deplorable, since it required infinite wisdom to find

out a way for their deliverance. The wisdom of angels was not sufficient nothing but divine wisdom could reach and remedy their case. And all the persons of the Trinity did enter into a consultation about it. If man's misery were not very great, divine wisdom would not have been exercised for his deliverance from it. God would not contrive and do things so wonderful in a trivial affair. If the salvation of a sinner were not a great salvation, from an exceeding great misery, it is not to be supposed, that God's wisdom should be more signalized in this affair than in any other whatever.

But so it is; this contrivance seems to be spoken of in Scripture as the master-piece of divine wisdom. This work of redemption is represented as most wonderful, and spoken of in Scripture in the most exalted manner of any work of God.—Doubtless therefore salvation is a great thing; and consequently the misery that sinners are saved from, is a great and unspeakable misery. Now this is the misery that you are all in, who remain in a natural condition. This is the condemnation you lie under. This is the wrath of God that abides upon you. The wisdom of God knew it to be a very doleful thing for a person to be in a natural state, and therefore did so exercise itself to deliver miserable sinners out of it. But this is the state that many among us do yet remain in.

Secondly. Consider that if you continue in the state you are in, you will be so far from being the better for this contrivance, that you will be much *more miserable* for it. The justice and wisdom of the way of salvation will be your condemnation. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light," John iii. 19. If you continue in the state that you are now in, it would have been better for you, if Christ had never died for sinners; if God had left all mankind to perish, as he did the fallen angels. Your punishment then would have been light in comparison of what it will be now. You will have greater sins by far to answer for; and all your sins will be abundantly the more aggravated.

Since I have been upon this subject, I have observed, that the work of redemption is an occasion of the elect being brought to greater happiness than man could have had, if he had not fallen. And it is also true as to reprobates, that it will be the occasion of their having greater misery than they would have had, if there had been no redemption. 2 Cor. ii. 15, "For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one we are a savor of death unto death; and to the other we are a savor of life unto life." If you perish at last, you will be the more miserable for the benefits of the gospel being so glorious, and that because your crime in rejecting and despising them will be the more heinous. Heb. ii. 3, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"

Thirdly. Whilst you continue an unbeliever, *the more you hear* of this way of salvation, your condition will become the more miserable. The longer you sit under the preaching of the gospel, the more doleful does your case grow. Your guilt continually increases. For your refusals of the gospel, and your rejections of this way of salvation are so much the oftener repeated. Every time you hear the gospel preached, you are guilty of a renewed rejection of it, the guilt of which therefore you will have lying upon you. And the more you hear of the suitableness and glory of this way, the greater is your guilt who still continue to reject it. Every new illustration of the wisdom and grace of God in redemption, adds to your guilt: Matt. xxiii. 37, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not!"—What adds to your misery is, that as long as it continues it is a growing evil.

Fourthly Consider the danger there is, that you will never have any lot or portion in this matter; seeing there are but few that have. Christ has told us that strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. There have been but few in all ages of the world. Many seek; and many hope that they shall obtain. There are few that intend to be damned; while many hope that they shall some way or other find means to escape eternal misery. But after all, there are but few saved; or obtain the benefits of redemption.

SECTION XI.

Exhortation to come to Christ.

I conclude with a use of exhortation to come to Christ, and except of salvation in this way. You are invited to come to Christ, heartily to close with him, and trust in him for salvation: and if you do so, you shall have the benefit of this glorious contrivance. You shall have the benefit of all; as much as if the whole had been contrived for you alone. God has already contrived every thing that is needful for your salvation; and there is nothing wanting but your consent. Since God has taken this matter of the redemption of sinners into his own hand, he has made thorough work of it; he has not left it for you to finish. Satisfaction is already made, righteousness is already wrought out: death and hell are already conquered. The Redeemer has already taken possession of glory, and keeps it in his hands to bestow on them who come to him. There were many difficulties in the way, but they are all removed. The Saviour has already triumphed over all, and is at the right hand of God, to give eternal life to his people.

Salvation is ready brought to your door; and the Saviour stands, knocks, and calls that you would open to him, that he might bring it in to you. There remains nothing but your consent. All the difficulty now remaining is with your own heart. If you perish now, it must be wholly at your door. It must be because you would not come to Christ that you might have life; and because you virtually choose death rather than life: Prov. viii. 36, "He that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death."—All that is now required of you, is, that your heart should close with Christ as a Saviour. Here consider,

1. That the wisdom of God hath so contrived, that he hath forestalled all your *objections*. If you make objections against Christ and the way of salvation, they must be all unreasonable. You cannot reasonably object that your sins are of such a nature, that God's honor will not allow of your pardon. It is true God insists upon his own honor. He is a God that will be honored, and his majesty shall be vindicated: and when sinners cast contempt upon him, his honor requires vengeance. But God has so contrived this way, that his honor may be repaired by the punishment of sin without the sinner's suffering, how great soever the sin be. Herein the wisdom of this way appears, that there is a sufficiency for the greatest and most heinous transgressors.

You cannot object that God the Father will not be willing to accept you, for the Mediator's sake; for he hath chosen his own Son to be a mediator, to cut off any such objections. So you may be sure that God will receive you if you go to him through Christ.—You cannot object that God the Father has not given sufficient assurance of salvation to believers; for the principal things, those which would have been most difficult to believe, are already fulfilled: God hath already given his Son to die for us. This, before it was accomplished,

was much more strange, and difficult to believe, than that he should give eternal life to sinners after Christ died for them.: Rom. viii. 32, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?"

There is no room to doubt but that if we accept of Christ, God will give eternal life; for he hath given it already into the hands of our Saviour for us. He hath intrusted him with the whole affair. He hath given all things into his hands, that he might give eternal life to as many as should come to him. The Father hath appointed him who died for believers, to be their judge, to have the whole determination of the matter, and the disposal of the reward, in his own hand. And you cannot doubt but that Christ will be willing to bestow eternal life on them for whom he purchased it. For if he is not willing to bestow it, surely he never would have died to purchase it. Who can think that Christ would be so desirous of sinners being saved, as to undergo so much for it; and not be willing to let them have it, when he had obtained it for them? Consider,

2. The wisdom of God hath contrived that there should be in the *person* of the Saviour all manner of attractives to draw us to him. He has in him all possible excellency. He is possessed of all the beauty and glory of the Godhead. So that there can be no manner of excellency, nor degree of excellency that we can devise, but what is in the person of the Saviour.—But yet so redundant has the wisdom of God been, in providing attractives in order that we should come to Christ, it hath so ordered that there should also be all human excellencies in him. If there be any thing attractive in this consideration, that Christ is one in our own nature, one of us; this is true of Christ. He is not only in the divine, but in the human nature. He is truly a man, and has all possible human excellencies. He was of a most excellent spirit; wise and holy, condescending and meek, and of a lowly, benign, and benevolent disposition.

Again: The wisdom of God hath chosen a person of great love to sinners, and who should show that love in the most endearing manner possible. What more *condescending* love can there be, than the love of a divine person to such worms of the dust? What *freer* love can there be than love to enemies? What *greater* love can there be, than dying love? And what more endearing *expression* of love, than dying for the beloved? And the wisdom of God hath so contrived, that Christ shall sustain that office which should most tend to endear him to us, and draw us to him: the office of a Redeemer, a redeemer from eternal misery, and the purchaser of all happiness.

And if all this be not enough to draw us, the wisdom of God hath ordered more; it hath provided us with a Saviour that should offer himself to us in the most endearing relation. He offers to receive us as friends. To receive us to a union to himself, to become our spiritual husband and portion forever.—And the wisdom of God has provided us a Saviour that woos in a manner that has the greatest tendency to win our hearts. His word is most attractive. He stands at our door and knocks. He does not merely command us to receive him: but he condescends to apply himself to us in a more endearing manner. He entreats and beseeches us in his word and by his messengers.

3. The wisdom of God hath contrived that there should be all manner of attractives in the *benefits* that Christ offers you. There are not only the excellencies of the person of Christ to draw you to him, but the desirable benefits he offers. Here is what is most suitable to the cravings of the human nature. Men when distressed and burdened, long for ease and *rest:* here it is offered to us in Christ. "Come unto me," says he, "all ye that labor and are heavy

laden, and I will give you rest."—Men when in fear of danger, long for *safety:* here it is provided for us in Christ. God promises that he will become a shield and buckler, a strong rock and high tower to those that trust in him.—Those that mourn need *comfort:* Christ tells us that "he came to comfort those that mourn," Isa. lxi. 2.—The blind need to have their eyes opened. The light is sweet to men: Christ offers to anoint our eyes with eye-salve that we may see glorious light. He will be our sun, and the light of God's countenance. What is more dear to men than *life?* Christ hath purchased for men, that they should live forever: Psal. xxi. 4, "He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days forever and ever."—How greatly is a crown prized and admired by the children of men! And Christ offers this;—not a corruptible crown, but an incorruptible and far more glorious crown than any worn by earthly kings: a crown of glory, the lustre of which shall never fade, nor decay; with an everlasting kingdom.—Do men love *pleasures?* Here are pleasures for evermore. What could there be more to draw our hearts to Jesus Christ, and to make us willing to accept of him for our Saviour, with all his unspeakable benefits?

SERMON VI.*

GOD GLORIFIED IN MAN'S DEPENDENCE.

1 Cor. i. 29—31.—That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; that according as is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

Those Christians to whom the apostle directed this epistle, dwelt in a part of the world where human wisdom was in great repute; as the apostle observes in the 22d verse of this chapter, "The Greeks seek after wisdom." Corinth was not far from Athens, that had been for many ages the most famous seat of philosophy and learning in the world.

The apostle therefore observes to them, how that God, by the gospel, destroyed and brought to nought their human wisdom. The learned Grecians, and their great philosophers, by all their wisdom did not know God: they were not able to find out the truth in divine things. But after they had done their utmost to no effect, it pleased God at length to reveal himself by the gospel, which they accounted foolishness. He "chose the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, and the base things of the world, and things that are despised, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought the things that are." And the apostle informs them why he thus did, in the verse of the text; *That no flesh should glory in his presence*, &c.

In which words may be observed,

1. What God aims at in the disposition of things in the affair of redemption, viz., that man should not glory in himself, but alone in God; *That no flesh should glory in his presence,—that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.*

2. How this end is attained in the work of redemption, viz., by that absolute and immediate dependence which men have upon God in that work for all their good. Inasmuch as,

First. All the good that they have is in and through Christ; *He is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.* All the good of the fallen and redeemed creature is concerned in these four things, and cannot be better distributed than into them; but Christ is each of them to us, and we have none of them any otherwise than in him. *He is made of God unto us wisdom:* in him are all the proper good and true excellency of the understanding. Wisdom was a thing that the Greeks admired; but Christ is the true light of the world, it is through him alone that true wisdom is imparted to the mind. It is in and by Christ that we have righteousness: it is by being in him that we are justified, have our sins pardoned, and are received as righteous into God's favor. It is by Christ that we have sanctification: we have in him true excellency of heart as well as of understanding; and he is made unto us inherent, as well as imputed righteousness. It is by Christ that we have redemption, or actual deliverance from all misery, and the bestowment of all happiness and glory. Thus we have all our good by Christ, who is God.

Secondly. Another instance wherein our dependence on God for all our

* This was the first piece the author published 1731.

good appears, is this, That it is God that has given us Christ, that we might have these benefits through him; he *of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness*, &c.

THIRDLY. It is of him that we are in Christ Jesus, and come to have an interest in him, and so do receive those blessings which he is made unto us. It is God that gives us faith whereby we close with Christ.

So that in this verse is shown our dependence on each person in the Trinity for all our good. We are dependent on Christ the Son of God, as he is our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. We are dependent on the Father, who has given us Christ, and made him to be these things to us. We are dependent on the Holy Ghost, for it is *of him that we are in Christ Jesus*; it is the Spirit of God that gives faith in him, whereby we receive him, and close with him.

DOCTRINE.

"God is glorified in the work of redemption in this, that there appears in it so absolute and universal a dependence of the redeemed on him."

Here I propose to show, 1st, That there is an absolute and universal dependence of the redeemed on God for all their good. And 2dly, That God hereby is exalted and glorified in the work of redemption.

I. There is an absolute and universal dependence of the redeemed on God. The nature and contrivance of our redemption is such, that the redeemed are in every thing directly, immediately, and entirely dependent on God: they are dependent on him for all, and are dependent on him every way.

The several ways wherein the dependence of one being may be upon another for its good, and wherein the redeemed of Jesus Christ depend on God for all their good, are these, viz., that they have all their good of him, and that they have all through him, and that they have all in him: that he is the cause and original whence all their good comes, therein it is *of* him; and that he is the medium by which it is obtained and conveyed, therein they have it *through* him; and that he is that good itself that is given and conveyed, therein it is *in* him.

Now those that are redeemed by Jesus Christ do, in all these respects, very directly and entirely depend on God for their all.

FIRST. The redeemed have all their good of God; God is the great author of it; he is the first cause of it, and not only so, but he is the only proper cause.

It is of God that we have our Redeemer: it is God that has provided a Saviour for us. Jesus Christ is not only of God in his person, as he is the only begotten Son of God, but he is from God, as we are concerned in him, and in his office of Mediator: he is the gift of God to us: God chose and anointed him, appointed him his work, and sent him into the world.

And as it is God that gives, so it is God that accepts the Saviour. As it is God that provides and gives the Redeemer to buy salvation for us, so it is of God that salvation is bought: he gives the purchaser, and he affords the thing purchased.

It is of God that Christ becomes ours, that we are brought to him, and are united to him: it is of God that we receive faith to close with him, that we may have an interest in him. Eph. ii. 8, "For by grace ye are saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." It is of God that we actually do receive all the benefits that Christ has purchased. It is God that pardons and justifies, and delivers from going down to hell, and it is his favor that the redeemed are received into, and are made the objects of, when they are justified. So it is God that delivers from the dominion of sin, and cleanses us from our filthiness, and changes us from our deformity. It is of God that the redeemed do receive all their true excellency, wisdom, and holiness; and that two

ways, viz., as the Holy Ghost, by whom these things are immediately wrought, is from God, proceeds from him, and is sent by him; and also as the Holy Ghost himself is God, by whose operation and indwelling, the knowledge of divine things, and a holy disposition, and all grace, are conferred and upheld.

And though means are made use of in conferring grace on men's souls, yet it is of God that we have these means of grace, and it is God that makes them effectual. It is of God that we have the holy Scriptures; they are the word of God. It is of God that we have ordinances, and their efficacy depends on the immediate influence of the Spirit of God. The ministers of the gospel are sent of God, and all their sufficiency is of him. 2 Cor. iv. 7, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." Their success depends entirely and absolutely on the immediate blessing and influence of God. The redeemed have all,

1. Of the grace of God. It was of mere grace that God gave us his only begotten Son. The grace is great in proportion to the dignity and excellency of what is given: the gift was infinitely precious, because it was a person infinitely worthy, a person of infinite glory; and also because it was a person infinitely near and dear to God. The grace is great in proportion to the benefit we have given us in him: the benefit is doubly infinite, in that in him we have deliverance from an infinite, because an eternal misery; and do also receive eternal joy and glory. The grace in bestowing this gift is great in proportion to our unworthiness to whom it is given; instead of deserving such a gift, we merited infinitely ill of God's hands. The grace is great according to the manner of giving, or in proportion to the humiliation and expense of the method and means by which way is made for our having the gift. He gave him to us dwelling amongst us; he gave him to us incarnate, or in our nature; he gave him to us in our nature, in the like infirmities, in which we have it in our fallen state, and which in us do accompany, and are occasioned by the sinful corruption of our nature. He gave him to us in a low and afflicted state; and not only so, but he gave him to us slain, that he might be a feast for our souls.

The grace of God in bestowing this gift is most free. It was what God was under no obligation to bestow: he might have rejected fallen man, as he did the fallen angels. It was what we never did any thing to merit; it was given while we were yet enemies, and before we had so much as repented. It was from the love of God that saw no excellency in us to attract it; and it was without expectation of ever being requited for it.

And it is from mere grace that the benefits of Christ are applied to such and such particular persons. Those that are called and sanctified are to attribute it alone to the good pleasure of God's goodness, by which they are distinguished. He is sovereign, and hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will, he hardens.

Man hath now a greater dependence on the grace of God than he had before the fall. He depends on the free goodness of God for much more than he did then: then he depended on God's goodness for conferring the reward of perfect obedience: for God was not obliged to promise and bestow that reward: but now we are dependent on the grace of God for much more: we stand in need of grace, not only to bestow glory upon us, but to deliver us from hell and eternal wrath. Under the first covenant we depended on God's goodness to give us the reward of righteousness; and so we do now. And not only so, but we stand in need of God's free and sovereign grace to give us that righteousness; and yet not only so, but we stand in need of his grace to pardon our sin, and release us from the guilt and infinite demerit of it.

And as we are dependent on the goodness of God for more now than under the first covenant, so we are dependent on a much greater, more free and wonderful goodness. We are now more dependent on God's arbitrary and sovereign good pleasure. We were in our first estate dependent on God for holiness: we had our original righteousness from him; but then holiness was not bestowed in such a way of sovereign good pleasure as it is now. Man was created holy, and it became God to create holy all the reasonable creatures he created: it would have been a disparagement to the holiness of God's nature, if he had made an intelligent creature unholy. But now when a man is made holy, it is from mere and arbitrary grace; God may forever deny holiness to the fallen creature if he pleases, without any disparagement to any of his perfections.

And we are not only indeed more dependent on the grace of God, but our dependence is much more conspicuous, because our own insufficiency and helplessness in ourselves is much more apparent in our fallen and undone state, than it was before we were either sinful or miserable. We are more apparently dependent on God for holiness, because we are first sinful, and utterly polluted, and afterwards holy: so the production of the effect is sensible, and its derivation from God more obvious. If man was ever holy and always was so, it would not be so apparent, that he had not holiness necessarily, as an inseparable qualification of human nature. So we are more apparently dependent on free grace for the favor of God, for we are first justly the objects of his displeasure and afterwards are received into favor. We are more apparently dependent on God for happiness, being first miserable, and afterwards happy. It is more apparently free and without merit in us, because we are actually without any kind of excellency to merit, if there could be any such thing as merit in creature excellency. And we are not only without any true excellency, but are full of, and wholly defiled with, that which is infinitely odious. All our good is more apparently from God, because we are first naked and wholly without any good, and afterwards enriched with all good.

2. We receive all of the power of God. Man's redemption is often spoken of as a work of wonderful power as well as grace. The great power of God appears in bringing a sinner from his low state, from the depths of sin and misery, to such an exalted state of holiness and happiness. Eph. i. 19, "And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power."

We are dependent on God's power through every step of our redemption. We are dependent on the power of God to convert us, and give faith in Jesus Christ, and the new nature.

It is a work of creation: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature," 2 Cor. v. 17. "We are created in Christ Jesus," Eph. ii. 10. The fallen creature cannot attain to true holiness, but by being created again. Eph. iv. 24, "And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." It is a raising from the dead. Col. ii. 12, 13, "Wherein ye also are risen with him, through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." Yea, it is a more glorious work of power than mere creation, or raising a dead body to life, in that the effect attained is greater and more excellent. That holy and happy being, and spiritual life which is reached in the work of conversion, is a far greater and more glorious effect, than mere being and life. And the state from whence the change is made, of such a death in sin, and total corruption of nature, and depth of misery, is far more remote from the state attained, than mere death or nonentity.

It is by God's power also that we are preserved in a state of grace·

1 Pet. i. 5, "Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." As grace is at first from God, so it is continually from him, and is maintained by him, as much as light in the atmosphere is all day long from the sun, as well as at first dawning, or at sunrising.

Men are dependent on the power of God, for every exercise of grace, and for carrying on the work of grace in the heart, for the subduing of sin and corruption, and increasing holy principles, and enabling to bring forth fruit in good works, and at last bringing grace to its perfection, in making the soul completely amiable in Christ's glorious likeness, and filling of it with a satisfying joy and blessedness; and for the raising of the body to life, and to such a perfect state, that it shall be suitable for a habitation and organ for a soul so perfected and blessed. These are the most glorious effects of the power of God, that are seen in the series of God's acts with respect to the creatures.

Man was dependent on the power of God in his first estate, but he is more dependent on his power now; he needs God's power to do more things for him, and depends on the more wonderful exercise of his power. It was an effect of the power of God to make man holy at the first; but more remarkably so now, because there is a great deal of opposition and difficulty in the way. It is a more glorious effect of power to make that holy that was so depraved, and under the dominion of sin, than to confer holiness on that which before had nothing of the contrary. It is a more glorious work of power to rescue a soul out of the hands of the devil, and from the powers of darkness, and to bring it into a state of salvation, than to confer holiness where there was no prepossession or opposition. Luke xi. 21, 22, "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace; but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils." So it is a more glorious work of power to uphold a soul in a state of grace and holiness, and to carry it on till it is brought to glory, when there is so much sin remaining in the heart resisting, and Satan with all his might opposing, than it would have been to have kept man from falling at first, when Satan had nothing in man.

Thus we have shown how the redeemed are dependent on God for all their good, as they have all of him.

Secondly. They are also dependent on God for all, as they have all through him. It is God that is the medium of it, as well as the author and fountain of it. All that we have, wisdom, and the pardon of sin, deliverance from hell, acceptance in God's favor, grace and holiness, true comfort and happiness, eternal life and glory, we have from God by a Mediator; and this Mediator is God, which Mediator we have an absolute dependence upon as he through whom we receive all. So that here is another way wherein we have our dependence on God for all good. God not only gives us the Mediator, and accepts his mediation, and of his power and grace bestows the things purchased by the Mediator, but he is the Mediator.

Our blessings are what we have by purchase; and the purchase is made of God. the blessings are purchased of him, and God gives the purchaser; and not only so, but God is the purchaser. Yea, God is both the purchaser and the price; for Christ, who is God, purchased these blessings for us, by offering up himself as the price of our salvation. He purchased eternal life by the sacrifice of himself. Heb. vii. 27, "He offered up himself;" and ix. 26, "He hath appeared to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Indeed it was the human nature that was offered; but it was the same person with the divine, and therefore was an infinite price; it was looked upon as if God had been offered in sacrifice.

As we thus have our good through God, we have a dependence on God in a respect that man in his first estate had not. Man was to have eternal life then through his own righteousness; so that he had partly a dependence upon what was in himself; for we have a dependence upon that through which we have our good, as well as that from which we have it; and though man's righteousness that he then depended on was indeed from God, yet it was his own, it was inherent in himself; so that his dependence was not so immediately on God. But now the righteousness that we are dependent on is not in ourselves, but in God. We are saved through the righteousness of Christ: he *is made unto us righteousness;* and therefore is prophesied of, Jer. xxiii. 6, under that name, "the Lord our righteousness." In that the righteousness we are justified by is the righteousness of Christ, it is the righteousness of God: 2 Cor. v. 21, "That we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

Thus in redemption we have not only all things of God, but by and through him: 1 Cor. viii. 21, "But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him."

THIRDLY. The redeemed have all their good in God. We not only have it of him, and through him, but it consists in him; he is all our good.

The good of the redeemed is either objective or inherent. By their objective good, I mean that extrinsic object, in the possession and enjoyment of which they are happy. Their inherent good is that excellency or pleasure which is in the soul itself. With respect to both of which the redeemed have all their good in God, or, which is the same thing, God himself is all their good.

1. The redeemed have all their objective good in God. God himself is the great good which they are brought to the possession and enjoyment of by redemption. He is the highest good, and the sum of all that good which Christ purchased. God is the inheritance of the saints; he is the portion of their souls. God is their wealth and treasure, their food, their life, their dwelling place, their ornament and diadem, and their everlasting honor and glory. They have none in heaven but God; he is the great good which the redeemed are received to at death, and which they are to rise to at the end of the world. The Lord God, he is the light of the heavenly Jerusalem; and is the "river of the water of life," that runs, and "the tree of life that grows, in the midst of the paradise of God." The glorious excellencies and beauty of God will be what will for ever entertain the minds of the saints, and the love of God will be their everlasting feast. The redeemed will indeed enjoy other things; they will enjoy the angels, and will enjoy one another; but that which they shall enjoy in the angels, or each other, or in any thing else whatsoever that will yield them delight and happiness, will be what will be seen of God in them.

2. The redeemed have all their inherent good in God. Inherent good is twofold; it is either excellency or pleasure. These the redeemed not only derive from God, as caused by him, but have them in him. They have spiritual excellency and joy by a kind of participation of God. They are made excellent by a communication of God's excellency: God puts his own beauty, i. e., his beautiful likeness, upon their souls: they are made partakers of the divine nature, or moral image of God, 2 Pet. i. 4. They are holy by being made partakers of God's holiness, Heb. xii. 10. The saints are beautiful and blessed by a communication of God's holiness and joy, as the moon and planets are bright by the sun's light. The saint hath spiritual joy and pleasure by a kind of effusion of God on the soul. In these things the redeemed have communion with God; that is, they partake with him and of him.

The saints have both their spiritual excellency and blessedness by the gift of the Holy Ghost, or Spirit of God, and his dwelling in them. They are not only caused by the Holy Ghost, but are in the Holy Ghost as their principle. The Holy Spirit becoming an inhabitant, is a vital principle in the soul: he, acting in, upon, and with the soul, becomes a fountain of true holiness and joy, as a spring is of water, by the exertion and diffusion of itself. John iv. 14, "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Compared with chap. vii. 38, 39, "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water; but this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive." The sum of what Christ has purchased for us, is that spring of water spoken of in the former of those places, and those rivers of living water spoken of in the latter. And the sum of the blessings, which the redeemed shall receive in heaven, is that river of water of life that proceeds from the throne of God and the Lamb, Rev. xxii. 1. Which doubtless signifies the same with those rivers of living water, explained, John vii. 38, 39, which is elsewhere called the "river of God's pleasures." Herein consists the fulness of good, which the saints receive by Christ. It is by partaking of the Holy Spirit, that they have communion with Christ in his fulness. God hath given the Spirit, not by measure unto him, and they do receive of his fulness, and grace for grace. This is the sum of the saints' inheritance; and therefore that little of the Holy Ghost which believers have in this world, is said to be the earnest of their inheritance. 2 Cor. i. 22, "Who hath also sealed us, and given us the Spirit in our hearts." And chap. v. 5, "Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing, is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." And Eph. i. 13, 14, "Ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession."

The Holy Spirit and good things are spoken of in Scripture as the same; as if the Spirit of God communicated to the soul, comprised all good things: Matt. vii. 11, "How much more shall your heavenly Father give good things to them that ask him?" In Luke it is, chap. xi. 13, "How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" This is the sum of the blessings that Christ died to procure, and that are the subject of gospel promises: Gal. iii. 13, 14, "He was made a curse for us, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." The Spirit of God is the great promise of the Father: Luke xxiv. 49, "Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you." The Spirit of God therefore is called "the Spirit of promise," Eph. i. 13. This promised thing Christ received, and had given into his hand, as soon as he had finished the work of our redemption, to bestow on all that he had redeemed: Acts ii. 33, "Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye both see and hear." So that all the holiness and happiness of the redeemed is in God. It is in the communications, indwelling, and acting of the Spirit of God. Holiness and happiness are in the fruit, here and hereafter, because God dwells in them, and they in God.

Thus it is God that has given us the Redeemer, and it is of him that our good is purchased: so it is God that is the Redeemer, and the price; and it is God also that is the good purchased. So that all that we have is of God, and through him, and in him: Rom. xi. 36, "For of him, and through him, and to him, or in him, are all things." The same in the Greek that is here rendered *to him*, is rendered *in him*, 1 Cor. vii. 6.

II. God is glorified in the work of redemption by this means, viz., By there being so great and universal a dependence of the redeemed on him.

1. Man hath so much the greater occasion and obligation to take notice and acknowledge God's perfections and all-sufficiency. The greater the creature's dependence is on God's perfections, and the greater concern he has with them, so much the greater occasion has he to take notice of them. So much the greater concern any one has with, and dependence upon, the power and grace of God, so much the greater occasion has he to take notice of that power and grace. So much the greater and more immediate dependence there is on the divine holiness, so much the greater occasion to take notice of, and acknowledge that. So much the greater and more absolute dependence we have on the divine perfections, as belonging to the several persons of the Trinity, so much the greater occasion have we to observe and own the divine glory of each of them. That which we are most concerned with, is surely most in the way of our observation and notice; and this kind of concern with any thing, viz., dependence, does especially tend to command and oblige the attention and observation. Those things that we are not much dependent upon, it is easy to neglect; but we can scarce do any other than mind that which we have a great dependence on. By reason of our so great dependence on God, and his perfections, and in so many respects, he and his glory are the more directly set in our view, which way soever we turn our eyes.

We have the greater occasion to take notice of God's all-sufficiency, when all our sufficiency is thus every way of him. We have the more occasion to contemplate him as an infinite good, and as the fountain of all good. Such a dependence on God, demonstrates God's all-sufficiency. So much as the dependence of the creature is on God, so much the greater does the creature's emptiness in himself appear to be; and so much the greater the creature's emptiness, so much the greater must the fulness of the Being be who supplies him. Our having all of God shows the fulness of his power and grace: our having all through him shows the fulness of his merit and worthiness; and our having all in him demonstrates his fulness of beauty, love, and happiness.

And the redeemed, by reason of the greatness of their dependence on God, have not only so much the greater occasion, but obligation to contemplate and acknowledge the glory and fulness of God. How unreasonable and ungrateful should we be if we did not acknowledge that sufficiency and glory that we do absolutely, immediately, and universally depend upon!

2. Hereby is demonstrated how great God's glory is considered comparatively, or as compared with the creature's. By the creature's being thus wholly and universally dependent on God, it appears that the creature is nothing, and that God is all. Hereby it appears that God is infinitely above us; that God's strength, and wisdom, and holiness, are infinitely greater than ours. However great and glorious the creature apprehends God to be, yet if he be not sensible of the difference between God and him, so as to see that God's glory is great, compared with his own, he will not be disposed to give God the glory due to his name. If the creature, in any respect, sets himself upon a level with God, or exalts himself to any competition with him, however he may apprehend that great honor and profound respect may belong to God from those that are more inferior, and at a greater distance, he will not be so sensible of its being due from him. So much the more men exalt themselves, so much the less will they surely be disposed to exalt God. It is certainly a thing that God aims at in the disposition of things in the affair of redemption (if we allow the Scriptures to be a revelation of God's mind), that God should appear all, and man noth

ing. It is God's declared design that others should not "glory in his presence;" which implies that it is his design to advance his own comparative glory. So much the more man "glories in God's presence," so much the less glory is ascribed to God.

3. By its being thus ordered, that the creature should have so absolute and universal a dependence on God, provision is made that God should have our whole souls, and should be the object of our undivided respect. If we had our dependence partly on God, and partly on something else, man's respect would be divided to those different things on which he had dependence. Thus it would be if we depended on God only for a part of our good, and on ourselves, or some other being for another part: or if we had our good only from God, and through another that was not God, and in something else distinct from both, our hearts would be divided between the good itself, and him from whom, and him through whom we received it. But now there is no occasion for this, God being not only he from or of whom we have all good, but also through whom and one that is that good itself, that we have from him and through him. So that whatsoever there is to attract our respect, the tendency is still directly towards God, all unites in him as the centre.

USE.

1. We may here observe the marvellous wisdom of God, in the work of redemption. God hath made man's emptiness and misery, his low, lost and ruined state into which he sunk by the fall, an occasion of the greater advancement of his own glory, as in other ways, so particularly in this, that there is now a much more universal and apparent dependence of man on God. Though God be pleased to lift man out of that dismal abyss of sin and wo into which he was fallen, and exceedingly to exalt him in excellency and honor, and to a high pitch of glory and blessedness, yet the creature hath nothing in any respect to glory of; all the glory evidently belongs to God, all is in a mere, and most absolute and divine dependence on the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

And each person of the Trinity is equally glorified in this work: there is an absolute dependence of the creature on every one for all: all is of the Father, all through the Son, and all in the Holy Ghost. Thus God appears in the work of redemption as all in all. It is fit that he that is, and there is none else, should be the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the all, and the only, in this work.

2. Hence those doctrines and schemes of divinity that are in any respect opposite to such an absolute and universal dependence on God, do derogate from God's glory, and thwart the design of the contrivance for our redemption. Those schemes that put the creature in God's stead, in any of the forementioned respects, that exalt man into the place of either Father, Son, or Holy Ghost, in any thing pertaining to our redemption; that, however they may allow of a dependence of the redeemed on God, yet deny a dependence that is so absolute and universal; that own an entire dependence on God for some things, but not for others; that own that we depend on God for the gift and acceptance of a Redeemer, but deny so absolute a dependence on him for the obtaining of an interest in the Redeemer; that own an absolute dependence on the Father for giving his Son, and on the Son for working out redemption, but not so entire a dependence on the Holy Ghost for conversion, and a being in Christ, and so coming to a title to his benefits; that own a dependence on God for means of grace, but not absolutely for the benefit and success of those means; that own a partial dependence on the power of God, for the obtaining and exercising

holiness, but not a mere dependence on the arbitrary and sovereign grace of God, that own a dependence on the free grace of God for a reception into his favor, so far that it is without any proper merit, but not as it is without being attracted, or moved with any excellency; that own a partial dependence on Christ, as he through whom we have life, as having purchased new terms of life, but still hold that the righteousness through which we have life is inherent in ourselves, as it was under the first covenant; and whatever other way any scheme is inconsistent with our entire dependence on God for all, and in each of those ways, of having all of him, through him, and in him, it is repugnant to the design and tenor of the gospel, and robs it of that which God accounts its lustre and glory.

3. Hence we may learn a reason why faith is that by which we come to have an interest in this redemption; for there is included in the nature of faith, a sensibleness and acknowledgment of this absolute dependence on God in this affair. It is very fit that it should be required of all, in order to their having the benefit of this redemption, that they should be sensible of, and acknowledge their dependence on God for it. It is by this means that God hath contrived to glorify himself in redemption; and it is fit that God should at least have this glory of those that are the subjects of this redemption, and have the benefit of it.

Faith is a sensibleness of what is real in the work of redemption; and as we do really wholly depend on God, so the soul that believes doth entirely depend on God for all salvation, in its own sense and act. Faith abases men, and exalts God, it gives all the glory of redemption to God alone. It is necessary in order to saving faith, that man should be emptied of himself, that he should be sensible that he is "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Humility is a great ingredient of true faith: he that truly receives redemption, receives it as a little child. Mark x. 15, "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of heaven as a little child, he shall not enter therein." It is the delight of a believing soul to abase itself and exalt God alone: that is the language of it, Psalm cxv. 1, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy name give glory."

4. Let us be exhorted to exalt God alone, and ascribe to him all the glory of redemption. Let us endeavor to obtain, and increase in a sensibleness of our great dependence on God, to have our eye to him alone, to mortify a self-dependent, and self-righteous disposition. Man is naturally exceeding prone to be exalting himself and depending on his own power or goodness, as though he were he from whom he must expect happiness, and to have respect to enjoyments alien from God and his Spirit, as those in which happiness is to be found.

And this doctrine should teach us to exalt God alone, as by trust and reliance, so by praise. *Let him that glorieth, glory in the Lord.* Hath any man hope that he is converted, and sanctified, and that his mind is endowed with true excellency and spiritual beauty, and his sins forgiven, and he received into God's favor, and exalted to the honor and blessedness of being his child, and an heir of eternal life; let him give God all the glory; who alone makes him to differ from the worst of men in this world, or the miserablest of the damned in hell. Hath any man much comfort and strong hope of eternal life, let not his hope lift him up, but dispose him the more to abase himself, and reflect on his own exceeding unworthiness of such a favor, and to exalt God alone. Is any man eminent in holiness, and abundant in good works, let him take nothing of the glory of it to himself, but ascribe it to him whose "workmanship we are, created in Christ Jesus unto good works."

SERMON VII.

THE EXCELLENCY OF CHRIST.

REVELATION v. 5, 6.—And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain—

THE visions and revelations that the Apostle John had of the future events of God's providence are here introduced with a vision of the book of God's decrees, by which those events were foreordained; which is represented in the first verse of this chapter, as a book in the right hand of him that sat on the throne, "written within and on the back side, and sealed with seven seals." Books in the form in which they were wont of old to be made, were broad leaves of parchment or paper, or something of that nature, joined together at one edge, and so rolled up together, and then sealed, or some way fastened together, to prevent their unfolding and opening. Hence we read of the roll of a book, Jer. xxxvi. 2. It seems to have been such a book that John had the vision of here; and therefore it is said to be "written within and on the back side," i. e., on the inside pages, and also on one of the outside pages, viz., that that was rolled in, in the rolling of the book up together. And it is said to be "sealed with seven seals," to signify that what was written in it was perfectly hidden and secret; or that God's decrees of future events are sealed, and shut up from all possibility of being discovered by creatures, till God is pleased to make them known. We find that seven is often used in Scripture as the number of perfection, to signify the superlative or most perfect degree of any thing; which probably came from that, that on the seventh day God beheld the works of the creation finished, and rested and rejoiced in them, as being complete and perfect.

When John saw this book, he tells us, he "saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon." And that he wept much, because "no man was found worthy to open the book, neither to look thereon." And then he tells us how his tears were dried up, viz., that "one of the elders said unto him, Weep not; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah hath prevailed," &c., as in the text. Though no man nor angel, nor any mere creature, was found either able to loose the seals, or worthy to be admitted to the privilege of reading the book; yet this was declared, for the comfort of this beloved disciple, that Christ was found both able and worthy. And we have an account in the succeeding chapters how he actually did it, opening the seals in order, first one, and then another, revealing what God had decreed should come to pass hereafter. And we have an account in this chapter, of his coming and taking the book out of the right hand of him that sat on the throne, and of the joyful praises that were sung to him in heaven and earth on that occasion.

Many things might be observed in the words of the text; but it is to my present purpose only to take notice of the two distinct appellations here given to Christ.

1. He is called a *Lion*. *Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah.* He seems to be called the Lion of the tribe of Judah, in allusion to what Jacob said in

his blessing of the tribes on his death-bed; who, when he came to bless Judah, compares him to a lion, Gen. xlix. 9: "Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?" And also to the standard of the camp of Judah in the wilderness, on which was displayed a lion, according to the ancient tradition of the Jews. It is much on account of the valiant acts of David, that the tribe of Judah, of which David was, is in Jacob's prophetical blessing compared to a lion; but more especially with an eye to Jesus Christ, who also was of that tribe, and was descended of David, and is in our text called "the root of David;" and therefore Christ is here called "the lion of the tribe of Judah."

2. He is called a *Lamb*. John was told of a lion that had prevailed to open the book, and probably expected to see a lion in his vision; but while he is expecting, behold a Lamb appears to open the book, an exceeding diverse kind of creature from a lion. A lion is a devourer, one that is wont to make terrible slaughter of others; and no creature more easily falls a prey to him than a lamb. And Christ is here represented not only as a lamb, a creature very liable to be slain, but a "Lamb as he had been slain," that is, with the marks of its deadly wounds appearing on it.

That which I would observe from the words, for the subject of my present discourse, is this, viz.,

There is an admirable conjunction of diverse excellencies in Jesus Christ.

The lion and the lamb, though very diverse kinds of creatures, yet have each their peculiar excellencies. The lion excels in strength, and in the majesty of his voice: the lamb excels in meekness and patience, besides the excellent nature of the creature as good for food, and yielding that which is fit for our clothing, and being suitable to be offered in sacrifice to God. But we see that Christ is in the text compared to both; because the diverse excellencies of both wonderfully meet in him.

In handling this subject, I would,

First, Show wherein there is an admirable conjunction of diverse excellencies in Christ.

Secondly, How this admirable conjunction of excellencies appears in Christ's acts.

And then make application.

First, I would show wherein there is an admirable conjunction of diverse excellencies in Jesus Christ. Which appears in three things.

I. There is a conjunction of such excellencies in Christ, as, in our manner of conceiving, are very diverse one from another.

II. There is in him a conjunction of such really diverse excellencies, as otherwise would have seemed to us utterly incompatible in the same subject.

III. Such diverse excellencies are exercised in him towards men, that otherwise would have seemed impossible to be exercised towards the same object.

I. There is a conjunction of such excellencies in Christ, as, in our manner of conceiving, are very diverse one from another. Such are the various divine perfections and excellencies that Christ is possessed of. Christ is a divine person, or one that is God; and therefore has all the attributes of God. The difference there is between these is chiefly relative, and in our manner of conceiving of them. And those that in this sense are most diverse, do meet in the person of Christ.

I shall mention two instances.

1 There do meet in Jesus Christ infinite highness and infinite condescension.

Christ, as he is God, is infinitely great and high above all. He is higher than the kings of the earth: for he is King of kings and Lord of lords. He is higher than the heavens, and higher than the highest angels of heaven. So great is he, that all men, all kings and princes, are as worms of the dust before him; all nations are as the drop of the bucket, and the light dust of the balance; yea, and angels themselves are as nothing before him. He is so high, that he is infinitely above any need of us; above our reach, that we cannot be profitable to him; and above our conceptions, that we cannot comprehend him. Prov. xxx. 4, "What is his name, or what is his son's name, if thou canst tell?" Our understandings, if we stretch them never so far, cannot reach up to his divine glory. Job xi. 8, "It is high as heaven, what canst thou do?" Christ is the Creator and great possessor of heaven and earth: he is sovereign Lord of all: he rules over the whole universe, and doth whatsoever pleaseth him: his knowledge is without bound: his wisdom is perfect, and what none can circumvent: his power is infinite, and none can resist him: his riches are immense and inexhaustible: his majesty is infinitely awful.

And yet he is one of infinite condescension. None are so low or inferior, but Christ's condescension is sufficient to take a gracious notice of them. He condescends not only to the angels, humbling himself to behold the things that are done in heaven, but he also condescends to such poor creatures as men; and that not only so as to take notice of princes and great men, but of those that are of meanest rank and degree, the "poor of the world," James ii. 5. Such as are commonly despised by their fellow creatures, Christ does not despise. 1 Cor. i. 28, "Base things of the world, and things that are despised, hath God chosen." Christ condescends to take notice of beggars, Luke xvi. 22, and of servants, and people of the most despised nations: in Christ Jesus is neither "Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free," Col. iii. 11. He that is thus high, condescends to take a gracious notice of little children. Matt. xix. 14, "Suffer little children to come unto me." Yea, which is much more, his condescension is sufficient to take a gracious notice of the most unworthy, sinful creatures, those that have infinite ill deservings.

Yea, so great is his condescension, that it is not only sufficient to take some gracious notice of such as these, but sufficient for every thing that is an act of condescension. His condescension is great enough to become their friend: it is great enough to become their companion, to unite their souls to him in spiritual marriage: it is great enough to take their nature upon him, to become one of them, that he may be one with them: yea, it is great enough to abase himself yet lower for them, even to expose himself to shame and spitting; yea, to yield up himself to an ignominious death for them. And what act of condescension can be conceived of greater? Yet such an act as this, has his condescension yielded to, for those that are so low and mean, despicable and unworthy!

Such a conjunction of such infinite highness and low condescension, in the same person, is admirable. We see, by manifold instances, what a tendency a high station has in men, to make them to be of a quite a contrary disposition. If one worm be a little exalted above another, by having more dust, or a bigger dunghill, how much does he make of himself! What a distance does he keep from those that are below him! And a little condescension is what he expects should be made much of, and greatly acknowledged. Christ condescends to wash our feet; but how would great men (or rather the bigger worms) account themselves debased by acts of far less condescension!

2. There meet in Jesus Christ, infinite justice and infinite grace. As Christ is a divine person he is infinitely holy and just, infinitely hating sin, and disposed

to execute condign punishment for sin. He is the Judge of the world, and is the infinitely just judge of it, and will not at all acquit the wicked, or by any means clear the guilty.

And yet he is one that is infinitely gracious and merciful. Though his justice be so strict with respect to all sin, and every breach of the law, yet he has grace sufficient for every sinner, and even the chief of sinners. And it is not only sufficient for the most unworthy to show them mercy, and bestow some good upon them, but to bestow the greatest good; yea, it is sufficient to bestow all good upon them, and to do all things for them. There is no benefit or blessing that they can receive so great, but the grace of Christ is sufficient to bestow it on the greatest sinner that ever lived. And not only so, but so great is his grace, that nothing is too much as the means of this good: it is sufficient not only to do great things, but also to suffer in order to it; and not only to suffer, but to suffer most extremely even unto death, the most terrible of natural evils; and not only death, but the most ignominious and tormenting, and every way the most terrible death that men could inflict; yea, and greater sufferings than men could inflict, who could only torment the body, but also those sufferings in his soul, that were the more immediate fruits of the wrath of God against the sins of those he undertakes for.

II. There do meet in the person of Christ such really diverse excellencies, which otherwise would have been thought utterly incompatible in the same subject; such as are conjoined in no other person whatever, either divine, human, or angelical; and such as neither men nor angels would ever have imagined could have met together in the same person, had it not been seen in the person of Christ. I would give some instances.

1. In the person of Christ do meet together infinite glory, and the lowest humility. Infinite glory and the virtue of humility, meet in no other person but Christ. They meet in no created person; for no created person has infinite glory: and they meet in no other divine person but Christ. For though the divine nature be infinitely abhorrent to pride, yet humility is not properly predicable of God the Father, and the Holy Ghost, that exist only in the divine nature; because it is a proper excellency only of a created nature; for it consists radically in a sense of a comparative lowness and littleness before God, or the great distance between God and the subject of this virtue; but it would be a contradiction to suppose any such thing in God.

But in Jesus Christ, who is both God and man, these two diverse excellencies are sweetly united. He is a person infinitely exalted in glory and dignity. Phil. ii. 6, "Being in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God." There is equal honor due to him with the Father. John v. 25, "That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." God himself says so to him: "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever," Heb. i. 8. And there is the same supreme respect and divine worship paid to him by the angels of heaven, as to God the Father; as there, verse 6, "Let all the angels of God worship him."

But however he is thus above all, yet he is lowest of all in humility. There never was so great an instance of this virtue among either men or angels, as Jesus. None ever was so sensible of the distance between God and him, or had a heart so lowly before God, as the man Christ Jesus, Matt. xi. 29. What a wonderful spirit of humility appeared in him, when he was here upon earth in all his behavior! In his contentment, in his mean outward condition, contentedly living in the family of Joseph the carpenter, and Mary his mother, for thirty years together and afterwards choosing outward meanness, poverty and

contempt, rather than earthly greatness; in his washing his disciples' feet, and in all his speeches and deportment towards them; in his cheerfully sustaining the form of a servant through his whole life, and submitting to such immense humiliation at death!

2. In the person of Christ do meet together infinite majesty and transcendent meekness. These again are two qualifications that meet together in no other person but Christ. Meekness, properly so called, is a virtue proper only to the creature: we scarcely ever find meekness mentioned as a divine attribute in Scripture; at least not in the New Testament; for thereby seems to be signified, a calmness and quietness of spirit, arising from humility in mutable beings that are naturally liable to be put into a ruffle by the assaults of a tempestuous and injurious world. But Christ being both God and man, hath both infinite majesty and superlative meekness.

Christ was a person of infinite majesty. It is he that is spoken of, Psalm xlv. 3: "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty." It is he that is mighty, that rideth on the heavens, and in his excellency on the sky. It is he that is terrible out of his holy places; who is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea; before whom a fire goeth, and burneth up his enemies round about; at whose presence the earth doth quake, and the hills do melt; who sitteth on the circle of the earth, and all the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; who rebukes the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up the rivers; whose eyes are as a flame of fire; from whose presence, and from the glory of whose power, the wicked shall be punished with everlasting destruction; who is the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, that hath heaven for his throne and the earth for his foostool, and is the high and lofty One, who inhabits eternity, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and of whose dominion there is no end.

And yet he was the most marvellous instance of meekness, and humble quietness of spirit, that ever was; agreeable to the prophecies of him. Matt. xxi. 4, 5, "All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass." And agreeable to what Christ declares of himself, Matt. xi. 29, "I am meek and lowly in heart." And agreeable to what was manifest in his behavior here in this world: for there was never such an instance seen on earth, of a meek behavior, under injuries and reproaches, and towards enemies; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; who was of a wonderful spirit of forgiveness, was ready to forgive his worst enemies, and prayed for them with fervent and effectual prayers. With what meekness did he appear when in the ring of soldiers that were contemning and mocking him, when he was silent and opened not his mouth, but went as a lamb to the slaughter! Thus is Christ a lion in majesty, and a lamb in meekness.

3. There meet, in the person of Christ, the deepest reverence towards God and equality with God. Christ, when he was here on earth, appeared full of holy reverence towards the Father: he paid the most reverential worship to him with postures of reverence. Thus we read of his "kneeling down and praying," Luke xxii. 41. This became Christ, as he was one that had taken on him the human nature; but at the same time he existed in the divine nature; whereby his person was in all respects equal to the person of the Father. God the Father hath no attribute or perfection that the Son hath not, in equal degree, and equal glory. These things meet in no other person but Jesus Christ.

4. There are conjoined in the person of Christ infinite worthiness of good, and the greatest patience under sufferings of evil. He was perfectly innocent, and deserved no suffering. He deserved nothing from God by any guilt of his own; and he deserved no ill from men. Yea, he was not only harmless and undeserving of suffering, but he was infinitely worthy, worthy of the infinite love of the Father, worthy of infinite and eternal happiness, and infinitely worthy of all possible esteem, love, and service from all men. And yet he was perfectly patient under the greatest sufferings that ever were endured in this world. Heb. xii. 2, "He endured the cross, despising the shame." He suffered not from his Father for his faults, but ours; and he suffered from men not for his faults, but for those things on account of which he was infinitely worthy of their love and honor; which made his patience the more wonderful and the more glorious. 1 Pet. ii. 20—24, "For what glory is it, if when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps; who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed." There is no such conjunction of innocence, worthiness and patience under sufferings, as in the person of Christ.

5. In the person of Christ are conjoined an exceeding spirit of obedience, with supreme dominion over heaven and earth. Christ is the Lord of all things in two respects: he is so, as he is God-man and mediator; and so his dominion is appointed, and given of the Father, and is by delegation from God, and he is, as it were, the Father's vicegerent. But he is Lord of all things in another respect, viz., as he is (by his original nature) God; and so he is by natural right the Lord of all, and Supreme over all as much as the Father. Thus, he has dominion over the world, not by delegation, but in his own right: he is not an under God, as the Arians suppose, but, to all intents and purposes, Supreme God.

And yet in the same person is found the greatest spirit of obedience to the commands and law of God that ever was in the universe; which was manifest in his obedience here in this world. John xiv. 31, "As the Father gave me commandment, even so I do." John xv. 10, "Even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." The greatness of his spirit of obedience appears in the perfection of his obedience, and in his obeying commands of such exceeding difficulty. Never any one received commands from God of such difficulty, and that were so great a trial of obedience, as Jesus Christ. One of God's commands to him was, that he should yield himself to those dreadful sufferings that he underwent. See John x. 18: "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself."—"This commandment received I of my Father." And Christ was thoroughly obedient to this command of God. Heb. vi. 8, "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things that he suffered." Philip. ii. 8, "He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Never was there such an instance of obedience in man nor angel as this, though he that obeyed was at the same time Supreme Lord of both angels and men.

6. In the person of Christ are conjoined absolute sovereignty and perfect resignation. This is another unparalleled conjunction. Christ, as he is God, is the

absolute sovereign of the world; he is the sovereign disposer of events. The decrees of God are all his sovereign decrees; and the work of creation, and all God's works of providence, are his sovereign works. It is he that worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will. Col. i. 16, 17, "By him, and through him, and to him, are all things." John v. 17, "The Father worketh hitherto, and I work." Matt. vii. 3, "I will, be thou clean."

But yet Christ was the most wonderful instance of resignation that ever appeared in the world. He was absolutely and perfectly resigned when he had a near and immediate prospect of his terrible sufferings, and the dreadful cup that he was to drink, the idea and expectation of which made his soul exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, and put him into such an agony that his sweat was as it were great drops or clots of blood, falling down to the ground; but in such circumstances he was wholly resigned to the will of God. Matt. xxvi. 39, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." Ver. 42, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass from me, except I drink it, thy will be done."

7. In Christ do meet together self-sufficiency, and an entire trust and reliance on God; which is another conjunction peculiar to the person of Christ. As he is a divine person, he is self-sufficient, standing in need of nothing: all creatures are dependent on him, but he is dependent on none, but is absolutely independent. His proceeding from the Father, in his eternal generation of filiation, argues no proper dependence on the will of the Father; for that proceeding was natural and necessary, and not arbitrary. But yet Christ entirely trusted in God: his enemies say that of him, "He trusted in God that he would deliver him," Matt. xxvii. 43. And the apostle testifies, 1 Pet. ii. 23, "That he committed himself to God."

III. Such diverse excellencies are expressed in him towards men, that otherwise would have seemed impossible to be exercised towards the same object; as particularly these three, justice, mercy, and truth. The same that are mentioned Psalm lxxxv. 10, "Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other." The strict justice of God, and even his revenging justice, and that against the sins of men, never was so gloriously manifested as in Christ. He manifested an infinite regard to the attribute of God's justice, in that, when he had a mind to save sinners, he was willing to undergo such extreme sufferings, rather than that their salvation should be to the injury of the honor of that attribute. And as he is the judge of the world, he doth himself exercise strict justice; he will not clear the guilty, nor at all acquit the wicked in judgment. And yet how wonderfully is infinite mercy towards sinners displayed in him! And what glorious and ineffable grace and love have been, and are exercised by him, towards sinful men! Though he be the just judge of a sinful world, yet he is also the Saviour of the world. Though he be a consuming fire to sin, yet he is the light and life of sinners. Rom. iii. 25, 26, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

So the immutable truth of God, in the threatenings of his law against the sins of men, was never so manifested as it is in Jesus Christ; for there never was any other so great a trial of the unalterableness of the truth of God in those threatenings, as when sin came to be imputed to his own Son. And then in Christ has been seen already an actual complete accomplishment of those threatenings which never has been, nor will be seen in any other in-

stance; because the eternity that will be taken up in fulfilling those threatenings on others, never will be finished. Christ manifested an infinite regard to this truth of God in his sufferings. And, in his judging the world, he makes the covenant of works, that contains those dreadful threatenings, his rule of judgment; he will see to it, that it is not infringed in the least jot or tittle; he will do nothing contrary to the threatenings of the law, and their complete fulfilment. And yet in him we have many great and precious promises, promises of perfect deliverance from the penalty of the law. And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life. And in him are all the promises of God, Yea, and Amen.

Having thus shown wherein there is an admirable conjunction of excellencies in Jesus Christ, I now proceed,

Secondly, To show how this admirable conjunction of excellencies appears in Christ's acts.

I. It appears in what Christ did in taking on him our nature. In this act his infinite condescension wonderfully appeared, that he that was God should become man; that the Word should be made flesh, and should take on him a nature infinitely below his original nature! And it appears yet more remarkably in the low circumstances of his incarnation. He was conceived in the womb of a poor young woman, whose poverty appeared in that, when she came to offer sacrifices for her purification, she brought what was allowed of in the law only in case of poverty; as Luke ii. 24: "According to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons." This was allowed only in case the person was so poor that she was not able to offer a lamb. Levit. xii. 8.

And though his infinite condescension thus appeared in the manner of his incarnation, yet his divine dignity also appeared in it; for though he was conceived in the womb of a poor virgin, yet he was there conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost. And his divine dignity also appeared in the holiness of his conception and birth. Though he was conceived in the womb of one of the corrupt race of mankind, yet he was conceived and born without sin; as the angels said to the blessed Virgin, Luke i. 35: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God."

His infinite condescension marvellously appeared in the manner of his birth. He was brought forth in a stable, because there was no room for them in the inn. The inn was taken up by others, that were looked upon as persons of greater account. The blessed Virgin, being poor and despised, was turned or shut out. Though she was in such necessitous circumstances, yet those that counted themselves her betters would not give place to her; and therefore, in the time of her travail, she was forced to betake herself to a stable; and when the child was born, it was wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger; and there Christ lay a little infant; and there he eminently appeared as a lamb. But yet this feeble infant, that was born thus in a stable, and laid in a manger, was born to conquer and triumph over Satan, that roaring lion. He came to subdue the mighty powers of darkness, and make a show of them openly; and so to restore peace on earth, and to manifest God's good will towards men, and to bring glory to God in the highest; according as the end of his birth was declared by the joyful songs of the glorious hosts of angels, appearing to the shepherds at the same time that the infant lay in the manger; whereby his divine dignity was manifested.

II. This admirable conjunction of excellencies appears in the acts and various passages of Christ's life. Though Christ dwelt on the earth in mean outward circumstances, whereby his condescension and humility especially appeared, and his majesty was veiled; yet his divine dignity and glory did, in many of his acts, shine through the veil, and it illustriously appeared, that he was not only the Son of man, but the great God.

Thus in the circumstances of his infancy, his outward meanness appeared; yet there was something then to show forth his divine dignity, in the wise men's being stirred up to come from the east to give honor to him, their being led by a miraculous star, and coming and falling down and worshipping him, and presenting him with gold, frankincense, and myrrh. His humility and meekness wonderfully appeared in his subjection to his mother and reputed father when he was a child: he therein appeared as a lamb. But his divine glory broke forth and shone, when, at twelve years old, he disputed with the doctors in the temple. In that he appeared, in some measure, as *the Lion of the tribe of Judah.*

And so, after he entered on his public ministry, his marvellous humility and meekness was manifested, in his choosing to appear in such mean outward circumstances, and in being so contented in them, when he was so poor that he had not where to lay his head, and depended on the charity of some of his followers for his subsistence; as appears by Luke viii. at the beginning; as also in his meek, condescending, and familiar treatment of his disciples; in his discourses with them, treating them as a father his children; yea, as friends and companions; and in his patient bearing such affliction and reproach, and so many injuries from the Scribes and Pharisees, and others: in these things he appeared as a lamb. And yet he at the same time did many ways show forth his divine majesty and glory, particularly in the miracles that he wrought, which were evidently divine works, and manifested omnipotent power, and so declared him to be *the Lion of the tribe of Judah.* His wonderful and miraculous works plainly showed him to be the God of nature; in that it appeared by them that he had all nature in his hands, and could lay an arrest upon it, and stop, and change its course as he pleased. In healing the sick, and opening the eyes of the blind, and unstopping the ears of the deaf, and healing the lame; he showed that he was the God that framed the eye, and created the ear, and was the author of the frame of man's body. By the dead's rising at his command, it appeared that he was the author and fountain of life, and that "God the Lord, to whom belong the issues from death." By his walking on the sea in a storm, when the waves were raised, he showed himself to be that God spoken of, Job ix. 8, "That treadeth on the waves of the sea." By his stilling the storm, and calming the rage of the sea, by his powerful command, saying, "Peace, be still," he showed himself to be he that has the command of the universe, and to be that God that brings things to pass by the word of his power, that speaks and it is done, that commands and it stands fast; and he that is spoken of, Psalm lxv. 7, "Who stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves." And Psalm cvii. 29, "That maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still." And Psalm lxxxix. 8, 9, "O Lord God of hosts, who is a strong Lord like unto thee, or to thy faithfulness round about thee? Thou rulest the raging of the sea; when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them." Christ, by casting out devils, remarkably appeared as *the Lion of the tribe of Judah,* and showed that he was stronger than that roaring lion, that seeks whom he may devour. He commanded them to come out, and they were forced to obey. They were terribly afraid of him; they fall down before him, and beseech him not to torment them; he forces a whole legion of them to forsake their old

hold, by his powerful word; and they could not so much as enter into the swine without his leave. He showed the glory of his omniscience, by telling the thoughts of men; as we have often an account. Herein he appeared to be that God spoken of, Amos iv. 13, "That declareth unto man what is his thought." Thus, in the midst of his meanness and humiliation, his divine glory appeared in his miracles: John ii. 11, "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory."

And though Christ ordinarily appeared without outward glory, and in great obscurity, yet at a certain time he threw off the veil, and appeared in his divine majesty, so far as it could be outwardly manifested to men in this frail state, when he was transfigured in the mount. The Apostle Peter speaks of it, 2 Pet. i. 16, 17. Speaking there of himself, as one that was an "eye-witness of his majesty, when he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; which voice that came from heaven they heard, when they were with him in the holy mount."

And at the same time that Christ was wont to appear in such meekness, condescension, and humility, in his familiar discourses with his disciples, appearing therein as the Lamb of God; he was also wont to appear as the *Lion of the tribe of Judah*, with divine authority and majesty, in his so sharply rebuking the Scribes and Pharisees, and other hypocrites.

III. This admirable conjunction of excellencies remarkably appears in his offering up himself a sacrifice for sinners in his last sufferings. As this was the greatest thing in all the work of redemption, the greatest act of Christ in that work; so in this act especially does there appear that admirable conjunction of excellencies that has been spoken of. Christ never so much appeared as a lamb, as when he was slain: "He came like a lamb to the slaughter," Isaiah liii. 7. Then he was offered up to God as a lamb without blemish, and without spot: then especially did he appear to be the antitype of the lamb of the passover: 1 Cor. v. 7, "Christ our passover sacrificed for us." And yet in that act he did in an especial manner appear as *the Lion of the tribe of Judah;* yea, in this above all other acts, in many respects, as may appear in the following things.

1. Then was Christ in the greatest degree of his humiliation, and yet by that, above all other things, his divine glory appears. Christ's humiliation was great, in being born in such a low condition, of a poor virgin, and in a stable: his humiliation was great, in being subject to Joseph the carpenter, and Mary his mother, and afterwards living in poverty, so as not to have where to lay his head, and in suffering such manifold and bitter reproaches as he suffered, while he went about preaching and working miracles; but his humiliation was never so great as it was in his last sufferings, beginning with his agony in the garden, until he expired on the cross. Never was he subject to such ignominy as then; never did he suffer so much pain in his body, or so much sorrow in his soul; never was he in so great an exercise of his condescension, humility, meekness, and patience, as he was in these last sufferings; never was his divine glory and majesty covered with so thick and dark a veil; never did he so empty himself, and make himself of no reputation, as at this time; and yet never was his divine glory so manifested by any act of his, as in that act of yielding himself up to these sufferings. When the fruit of it came to appear, and the mystery and ends of it to be unfolded in the issue of it, then did the glory of it appear; then did it appear as the most glorious act of Christ that ever he exercised towards the creature. This act of his is celebrated by the angels and hosts of heaven with peculiar praises, as that which is above all others glorious, as you may see in the

context, verse 9, &c.: "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth. And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing."

2. He never in any act gave so great a manifestation of love to God, and yet never so manifested his love to those that were enemies to God, as in that act. Christ never did any thing whereby his love to the Father was so eminently manifested, as in his laying down his life, under such inexpressible sufferings, in obedience to his command, and for the vindication of the honor of his authority and majesty; nor did ever any mere creature give such a testimony of love to God as that was; and yet this was the greatest expression of all of his love to sinful men, that were enemies to God: Rom. v. 10, "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." The greatness of Christ's love to such appears in nothing so much as in its being dying love. That blood of Christ that was sweat out, and fell in great drops to the ground, in his agony was shed from love to God's enemies and his own. That shame and spitting, that torment of body, and that exceeding sorrow, even unto death, that he endured in his soul, was what he underwent from love to rebels against God, to save them from hell, and to purchase for them eternal glory. Never did Christ so eminently show his regard to God's honor, as in offering up himself a victim to revenging justice, to vindicate God's honor: and yet in this, above all, he manifested his love to them that dishonored God, so as to bring such guilt upon themselves, that nothing less than his blood could atone for it.

3. Christ never so eminently appeared for divine justice, and yet never suffered so much from divine justice, as when he offered up himself a sacrifice for our sins. In Christ's great sufferings, did his infinite regard to the honor of God's justice distinguishingly appear; for it was from regard to that, that he thus humbled himself: and yet in these sufferings, Christ was the mark of the vindictive expressions of that very justice of God. Revenging justice then spent all its force upon him, on the account of our guilt that was laid upon him; he was not spared at all; but God spent the arrows of his vengeance upon him, which made him sweat blood, and cry out upon the cross, and probably rent his vitals, broke his heart, the fountain of blood, or some other internal blood vessels, and by the violent fermentation turned his blood to water: for the blood and water that issued out of his side, when pierced by the spear, seems to have been extravasated blood; and so there might be a kind of literal fulfilment of that in Psalm xxii. 14, "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels." And this was the way and means by which Christ stood up for the honor of God's justice, viz., by thus suffering its terrible executions. For when he had undertaken for sinners, and had substituted himself in their room, divine justice could have its due honor no other way than by his suffering its revenges.

In this the diverse excellencies that meet in the person of Christ appeared, viz., his infinite regard to God's justice, and such love to those that have exposed themselves to it, as induced him thus to yield himself a sacrifice to it.

4. Christ's holiness never so illustriously shone forth as it did in his last sufferings; and yet he never was to such a degree treated as guilty. Christ's ho-

liness never had such a trial as it had then; and therefore never had so great a manifestation. When it was tried in this furnace, it came forth as gold, or as silver purified seven times. His holiness then above all appeared in his steadfast pursuit of the honor of God, and his obedience to him; for his yielding himself unto death was transcendently the greatest act of obedience that ever was paid to God by any one since the foundation of the world.

And yet then Christ was in the greatest degree treated as a wicked person. He was apprehended and bound as a malefactor. His accusers represented him as a most wicked wretch. In his sufferings before his crucifixion, he was treated as if he had been the worst and vilest of mankind; and then he was put to a kind of death, that none but the worst sort of malefactors were wont to suffer, those that were most abject in their persons, and guilty of the blackest crimes. And he suffered as though guilty from God himself, by reason of our guilt imputed to him; for he was made sin for us, who knew no sin; he was made subject to wrath, as if he had been sinful himself: he was made a curse for us.

Christ never so greatly manifested his hatred of sin, as against God, as in his dying to take away the dishonor that sin had done to God; and yet never was he to such a degree subject to the terrible effects of God's hatred to sin, and wrath against it, as he was then. In this appears those diverse excellencies meeting in Christ, viz., love to God, and grace to sinners.

5. He never was so dealt with as unworthy as in his last sufferings, and yet it is chiefly on account of them that he is accounted worthy. He was therein dealt with as if he had not been worthy to live: they cry out, "Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him," John xiv. 15. And they prefer Barabbas before him. And he suffered from the Father, as one whose demerits were infinite, by reason of our demerits that were laid upon him. And yet it was especially by that act of his, subjecting himself to those sufferings, that he merited, and on the account of which chiefly he was accounted worthy of his exaltation: Philip. ii. 8, 9, "He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death; wherefore God hath highly exalted him." And we see that it is on this account chiefly that he is extolled as worthy by saints and angels in the context: "Worthy," say they, "is the Lamb that was slain." This shows an admirable conjunction in him of infinite dignity, and infinite condescension and love to the infinitely unworthy.

6. Christ in his last sufferings suffered most extremely from those that he was then in his greatest act of love to. He never suffered so much from his Father (though not from any hatred to him, but from hatred to our sins), for he then forsook him (as Christ on the cross expresses it), or took away the comforts of his presence; and then "it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and put him to grief," as Isaiah liii. 10; yet he never gave so great a manifestation of love to God as then, as has been already observed. So Christ never suffered so much from the hands of men as he did then; yet never was so high an exercise of love to men He never was so ill treated by his disciples; who were so unconcerned about his sufferings, that they would not watch with him one hour, in his agony; and when he was apprehended, all forsook him and fled, except Peter, who denied him with oaths and curses. And yet then he was suffering, shedding his blood, and pouring out his soul unto death for them. Yea, he probably was then shedding his blood for some of them that shed his blood: he was dying for some that killed him; whom he prayed for while they were crucifying him; and were probably afterwards brought home to Christ by Peter's preaching. Compare Luke xxiii. 34, Acts ii. 23, 36, 37, 41, and chapter iii. 17, and chapter iv. 4, This shows an admirable meeting of justice and grace in the redemption of Christ.

7. It was in Christ's last suffering, above all, that he was delivered up to the power of his enemies; and yet by these, above all, he obtained victory over his enemies. Christ never was so in his enemies' hands, as in the time of his last sufferings. They sought his life before; but from time to time they were restrained, and Christ escaped out of their hands; and this reason is given for it, that his time was not yet come; but now they were suffered to work their will upon him; he was in a great degree delivered up to the malice and cruelty of both wicked men and devils; and therefore when Christ's enemies came to apprehend him, he says to them, Luke xxii. 53, "When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hand against me; but this is your hour, and the power of darkness."

And yet it was principally by means of those sufferings that he conquered and overthrew his enemies. Christ never so effectually bruised Satan's head, as when he bruised his heel. The weapon with which Christ warred against the devil, and obtained a most complete victory and glorious triumph over him, was the cross, the instrument and weapon with which he thought he had overthrown Christ, and brought on him shameful destruction. Col. ii. 14, 15, "Blotting out the hand-writing of ordinances—nailing it to his cross; and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it." In his last sufferings, Christ sapped the very foundations of Satan's kingdom; he conquered his enemies in their own territories, and beat them with their own weapons; as David cut off Goliath's head with his own sword. The devil had, as it were, swallowed up Christ, as the whale did Jonah; but it was deadly poison to him; he gave him a mortal wound in his own bowels; he was soon sick of his morsel, and forced to vomit him up again; and is to this day heart-sick of what he then swallowed as his prey. In those sufferings of Christ was laid the foundation of all that glorious victory that he has already obtained over Satan, in the overthrow of his heathenish kingdom in the Roman empire, and all the success the gospel has had since; and also of all his future and still more glorious victory that is to be obtained in all the earth. Thus Samson's riddle is most eminently fulfilled, Judges xiv. 14, "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." And thus the true Samson does more towards the destruction of his enemies at his death than in his life; in yielding up himself to death, he pulls down the temple of Dagon, and destroys many thousands of his enemies, even while they are making themselves sport in his sufferings; and so he whose type was the ark, pulls down Dagon, and breaks off his head and hands in his own temple, even while he is brought in there as Dagon's captive.

Thus Christ appeared at the same time, and in the same act, as both a lion and a lamb. He appeared as a lamb in the hands of his cruel enemies; as a lamb in the paws, and between the devouring jaws, of a roaring lion; yea, he was a lamb actually slain by this lion; and yet at the same time, as *the Lion of the tribe of Judah*, he conquers and triumphs over Satan, destroying his own devourer; as Samson did the lion that roared upon him, when he rent him as he would a kid. And in nothing has Christ appeared so much as a lion, in glorious strength destroying his enemies, as when he was brought as a lamb to the slaughter. In his greatest weakness he was most strong; and when he suffered most from his enemies, he brought the greatest confusion on his enemies.

Thus this admirable conjunction of diverse excellencies was manifest in Christ, in his offering up himself to God in his last sufferings.

IV. It is still manifest in his acts, in his present state of exaltation in heaven Indeed, in his exalted state, he most eminently appears in a manifestation of

those excellencies, on the account of which he is compared to a lion; but still he appears as a lamb. Rev. xiv. 1, "And I looked, and lo, a Lamb stood on Mount Sion;" as in his state of humiliation he chiefly appeared as a lamb, and yet did not appear without manifestations of his divine majesty and power, as *the Lion of the tribe of Judah*. Though Christ be now at the right hand of God, exalted as King of heaven, and Lord of the universe; yet as he still is in the human nature, he still excels in humility. Though the man Christ Jesus be the highest of all creatures in heaven, yet he as much excels them all in humility, as he doth in glory and dignity; for none sees so much of the distance between God and him as he does. And though he now appears in such glorious majesty and dominion in heaven, yet he appears as a lamb in condescending, mild and sweet treatment of his saints there; for he is a Lamb still, even in the midst of the throne of his exaltation; and he that is the shepherd of the whole flock is himself a Lamb, and goes before them in heaven as such. Rev. vii. 17, "For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Though in heaven every knee bows to him, and though the angels fall down before him, adoring him, yet he treats his saints with infinite condescension, mildness and endearment. And, in his acts towards the saints on earth, he still appears as a Lamb, manifesting exceeding love and tenderness, in his intercession for them, as one that has had experience of affliction and temptation: he has not forgot what these things are; nor has he forgot how to pity those that are subject to them. And he still manifests his lamb-like excellencies, in his dealings with his saints on earth, in admirable forbearance, love, gentleness and compassions, instructing, supplying, supporting and comforting them, often coming to them, and manifesting himself to them by his Spirit, that he may sup with them, and they with him, admitting them to sweet communion with him, enabling them with boldness and confidence to come to him and solace their hearts in him. And in heaven Christ still appears, as it were, with the marks of his wounds upon him; and so appears as a Lamb as it had been slain; as he was represented in vision to St. John, in the text, when he appeared to open the book sealed with seven seals, which is part of the glory of his exaltation.

V. And, *lastly*, this admirable conjunction of excellencies will be manifested in Christ's acts at the last judgment. He then, above all other times, will appear as *the Lion of the tribe of Judah* in infinite greatness and majesty, when he shall come in the glory of his Father, with all the holy angels, and the earth shall tremble before him, and the hills shall melt. This is he, spoken of Rev. xx. 11, that shall "sit on a great white throne, before whose face the earth and heaven shall flee away." He will then appear in the most dreadful and amazing manner to the wicked: the devils tremble at the thoughts of that appearance; and when it shall be, the kings and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bond man, and every free man, shall hide themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains, and shall cry to the mountains and rocks to fall on them and hide them from the face and wrath of the Lamb. And none can declare or conceive of the amazing manifestations of wrath in which he will then appear towards these; or the trembling and astonishment, the shrieking and gnashing of teeth, with which they shall stand before his judgment seat, and receive the terrible sentence of his wrath.

And yet he will at the same time appear as a Lamb to his saints: he will receive them as friends and brethren, treating them with infinite mildness and

love: there shall be nothing in him terrible to them; but towards them he will clothe himself wholly with sweetness and endearment. The church shall then be admitted to him as his bride: that shall be her wedding day: the saints shall all be sweetly invited to come with him to inherit the kingdom, and reign in it with him to all eternity.

APPLICATION.

I. From this doctrine we may learn one reason why Christ is called by such a variety of names, and held forth under such a variety of representations in Scripture. It is the better to signify and exhibit to us that variety of excellencies that meet together, and are conjoined in him. Many appellations are mentioned together in one verse: Isa. ix. 6, "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." It shows a wonderful conjunction of excellencies, that the same person should be a Son, born and given, and yet be the everlasting Father, without a beginning or end; that he should be a Child, and yet be he whose name is Counsellor, and the mighty God; and well may his name, in whom such things are conjoined, be called Wonderful.

By reason of the same wonderful conjunction, Christ is represented by a great variety of sensible things, that are on some account excellent. Thus in some places he is called a Sun, as Mal. iv. 2, in others a Star, Numb. xxiv. 17. And he is especially represented by the Morning Star, as being that which excels all other stars in brightness, and is the forerunner of the day, Rev. xxii. 16. And, as in our text, he is compared to a lion in one verse, and a lamb in the next, so sometimes he is compared to a roe, or a young hart, another creature most diverse from a lion. So in some places he is called a rock, in others he is compared to a pearl: in some places he is called a man of war, and the Captain of our salvation, in other places he is represented as a bridegroom. In the second chapter of Canticles, the 1st verse, he is compared to a rose and lily, that are sweet and beautiful flowers; in the next verse but one, he is compared to a tree, bearing sweet fruit. In Isa. liii. 2, he is called a Root out of a dry ground; but elsewhere, instead of that, he is called the Tree of Life, that grows (not in a dry or barren ground, but) "in the midst of the paradise of God," Rev. ii. 7.

II. Let the consideration of this wonderful meeting of diverse excellencies in Christ induce you to accept him, and close with him as your Saviour. As all manner of excellencies meet in him, so there are concurring in him all manner of arguments and motives, to move you to choose him for your Saviour, and every thing that tends to encourage poor sinners to come and put their trust in him. His fulness and all-sufficiency as a Saviour gloriously appear in that variety of excellencies that has been spoken of.

Fallen man is in a state of exceeding great misery, and is helpless in it, he is a poor weak creature, like an infant, cast out in its blood, in the day that it is born: but Christ is *the Lion of the tribe of Judah;* he is strong, though we are weak; he hath prevailed to do that for us which no creature else could do. Fallen man is a mean, despicable creature, a contemptible worm; but Christ who has undertaken for us, is infinitely honorable and worthy. Fallen man is polluted, but Christ is infinitely holy: fallen man is hateful, but Christ is infinitely lovely: fallen man is the object of God's indignation, but Christ is infinitely dear to him: we have dreadfully provoked God, but Christ has performed that righteousness that is infinitely precious in God's eyes.

And here is not only infinite strength and infinite worthiness, but infinite condescension; and love and mercy, as great as power and dignity: if you are a poor, distressed sinner, whose heart is ready to sink for fear that God never will have mercy on you, you need not be afraid to go to Christ, for fear that he is either unable or unwilling to help you: here is a strong foundation, and an inexhaustible treasure, to answer the necessities of your poor soul; and here is infinite grace and gentleness to invite and embolden a poor, unworthy, fearful soul to come to it. If Christ accepts you, you need not fear but that you will be safe; for he is a strong lion for your defence: and if you come, you need not fear but that you shall be accepted; for he is like a lamb to all that come to him, and receives them with infinite grace and tenderness. It is true he has awful majesty; he is the great God, and is infinitely high above you; but there is this to encourage and embolden the poor sinner, that Christ is a man as well as God; he is a creature as well as the Creator; and he is the most humble and lowly in heart of any creature in heaven or earth. This may well make the poor unworthy creature bold in coming to him. You need not hesitate one moment; but may run to him, and cast yourself upon him; you will certainly be graciously and meekly received by him. Though he be a lion, he will only be a lion to your enemies, but he will be a lamb to you. It could not have been conceived, had it not been so in the person of Christ, that there could have been so much in any Saviour, that is inviting, and tending to encourage sinners to trust in him. Whatever your circumstances are, you need not be afraid to come to such a Saviour as this: be you never so wicked a creature, here is worthiness enough: be you never so poor, and mean, and ignorant a creature, there is no danger of being despised; for though he be so much greater than you, he is also immensely more humble than you. Any one of you that is a father or mother, will not despise one of your own children that comes to you in distress; much less danger is there of Christ despising you, if you in your heart come to him.—Here let me a little expostulate with the poor, burdened, distressed soul.

What are you afraid of, that you dare not venture your soul upon Christ? Are you afraid that he cannot save you; that he is not strong enough to conquer the enemies of your soul? But how can you desire one stronger than the "mighty God?" as Christ is called, Isa. ix. 6. Is there need of greater than infinite strength? Are you afraid that he will not be willing to stoop so low as to take any gracious notice of you? But then, look on him, as he stood in the ring of soldiers, exposing his blessed face to be buffeted and spit upon by them! Behold him bound, with his back uncovered to those that smote him! And behold him hanging on the cross! Do you think that he that had condescension enough to stoop to these things, and that for his crucifiers, will be unwilling to accept you if you come to him? Or, are you afraid, that if he does accept you, that God the Father will not accept him for you? But consider, will God reject his own Son, in whom his infinite delight is and has been, from all eternity, and that is so united to him, that if he should reject him, he would reject himself?

2. What is there that you can desire should be in a Saviour, that is not in Christ? Or, wherein should you desire a Saviour should be otherwise than Christ is? What excellency is there wanting? What is there that is great or good? What is there that is venerable or winning? What is there that is adorable or endearing? Or, what can you think of, that would be encouraging, that is not to be found in the person of Christ? Would you have your Saviour to be great and honorable, because you are not willing to be beholden to a

mean person? And is not Christ a person honorable enough to be worthy that you should be dependent on him? Is he not a person high enough to be worthy to be appointed to so honorable a work as your salvation? Would you not only have a Saviour that is of high degree, but would you have him, notwithstanding his exaltation and dignity, to be made also of low degree, that he might have experience of afflictions and trials, that he might learn by the things that he has suffered, to pity them that suffer and are tempted? And has not Christ been made low enough for you? And has he not suffered enough? Would you not only have him have experience of the afflictions you now suffer, but also of that amazing wrath that you fear hereafter, that he may know how to pity those that are in danger of it, and afraid of it? This Christ has had experience of, which experience gave him a greater sense of it, a thousand times, than you have, or any man living has. Would you have your Saviour to be one that is near to God, that so his mediation might be prevalent with him? And can you desire him to be nearer to God than Christ is, who is his only begotten Son, of the same essence with the Father? And would you not only have him near to God, but also near to you, that you may have free access to him? And would you have him nearer to you than to be in the same nature, and not only so, but united to you by a spiritual union, so close as to be fitly represented by the union of the wife to the husband, of the branch to the vine, of the member to the head; yea, so as to be looked upon as one, and called one spirit? For so he will be united to you, if you accept him. Would you have a Saviour that has given some great and extraordinary testimony of mercy and love to sinners, by something that he has done, as well as by what he says? And can you think or conceive of greater things than Christ has done? Was it not a great thing for him, who was God, to take upon him human nature; to be not only God, but man thenceforward to all eternity? But would you look upon suffering for sinners to be a yet greater testimony of love to sinners, than merely doing, though it be never so extraordinary a thing that he has done? And would you desire that a Saviour should suffer more than Christ has suffered for sinners? What is there wanting, or what would you add if you could, to make him more fit to be your Saviour?

But further, to induce you to accept of Christ as your Saviour, consider two things particularly.

1. How much Christ appears as the Lamb of God in his invitations to you to come to him and trust in him. With what sweet grace and kindness does he from time to time call and invite you; as Prov. viii. 4: "Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men." And Isa. lv. 1—3, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." How graciously is he here inviting every one that thirsts, and in so repeating his invitation over and over, "Come ye to the waters; come, buy and eat, yea, come!" And in declaring the excellency of that entertainment which he invites you to accept of, "Come, buy wine and milk;" and in assuring you that your poverty, and having nothing to pay for it, shall be no objection, "Come, he that hath no money, come without money and without price!" And in the gracious arguments and expostulations that he uses with you! As it follows, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? And your labor for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." As much as to say, "It is altogether needless for you to continue laboring and toiling for that which can never serve your turn, seeking rest in the world, and in your own righteousness:

I have made abundant provision for you, of that which is really good, and will fully satisfy your desires, and answer your end, and stand ready to accept of you: you need not be afraid; if you will come to me, I will engage to see all your wants supplied, and you made a happy creature." As he promises in the third verse, "Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." And so, Prov. ix. at the beginning. How gracious and sweet is the invitation there! "Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither;" let you be never so poor, ignorant, and blind a creature, you shall be welcome. And in the following words, Christ sets forth the provision that he has made for you: "Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled." You are in a poor famishing state, and have nothing wherewith to feed your perishing soul; you have been seeking something, but yet remain destitute: hearken, how Christ calls you to eat of his bread, and to drink of the wine that he hath mingled! And how much like a lamb does Christ appear in Matt. xi. 28—30: "Come unto me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest to your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." O thou poor distressed soul, whoever thou art, that art afraid that you never shall be saved, consider that this that Christ mentions is your very case, when he calls to them that labor, and are heavy laden! And how he repeatedly promises you rest if you come to him! In the 28th verse he says, "I will give you rest." And in the 29th verse, "Ye shall find rest to your souls." This is what you want. This is the thing you have been so long in vain seeking after. O how sweet would rest be to you, if you could but obtain it! Come to Christ, and you shall obtain it. And hear how Christ, to encourage you, represents himself as a lamb! He tells you, that he is meek and lowly in heart; and are you afraid to come to such a one? And again, Rev. iii. 20, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Christ condescends not only to call you to him, but he comes to you; he comes to your door, and there knocks. He might send an officer and seize you as a rebel and vile malefactor; but instead of that, he comes and knocks at your door, and seeks that you would receive him into your house, as your friend and Saviour. And he not only knocks at your door, but he stands there waiting, while you are backward and unwilling. And not only so, but he makes promises what he will do for you, if you will admit him, what privileges he will admit you to; he will "sup with you and you with him." And again, Rev. xxii. 16, 17, "I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come: and let him that heareth, say, Come: and let him that is athirst come: and whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely." How does Christ here graciously set before you his own winning, attractive excellency! And how does he condescend to declare to you not only his own invitation, but the invitation of the Spirit and the bride, if by any means he might encourage you to come! And how does he invite every one that will, that they may "take of the water of life freely," that they may take it a free gift, however precious it be, and though it be the water of life!

2 If you do come to Christ, he will appear as a lion, in his glorious power and dominion, to defend you. All those excellencies of his, in which he appears as a lion, shall be yours, and shall be employed for you in your defence, for your safety, and to promote your glory; he will be as a lion to fight against your enemies: he that touches you, or offends you, will provoke his wrath, as

ne that stirs up a lion Unless your enemies can conquer this lion, they shall not be able to destroy or hurt you; unless they are stronger than he, they shall not be able to hinder your happiness. Isa. xxxi. 4, "For thus hath the Lord spoken unto me, Like as the lion and the young lion roaring on his prey, when a multitude of shepherds is called forth against him, he will not be afraid of their voice, nor abase himself for the noise of them; so shall the Lord of hosts come down to fight for mount Zion, and for the hill thereof."

III. Let what has been said be improved to induce you to love the Lord Jesus Christ, and choose him for your friend and portion. As there is such an admirable meeting of diverse excellencies in Christ, so there is every thing in him to render him worthy of your love and choice, and to win and engage it. Whatsoever there is or can be, that is desirable to be in a friend, is in Christ, and that to the highest degree that can be desired.

Would you choose a friend that is a person of great dignity? It is a thing taking with men to have those for their friends that are much above them, because they look upon themselves honored by the friendship of such. Thus, how taking would it be with an inferior maid to be the object of the dear love of some great and excellent prince. But Christ is infinitely above you, and above all the princes of the earth; for he is King of kings. So honorable a person as this offers himself to you, in the nearest and dearest friendship.

And would you choose to have a friend not only great but good? In Christ, infinite greatness and infinite goodness meet together, and receive lustre and glory one from another. His greatness is rendered lovely by his goodness. The greater any one is without goodness, so much the greater evil; but when infinite goodness is joined with greatness, it renders it a glorious and adorable greatness. So, on the other hand, his infinite goodness receives lustre from his greatness. He that is of great understanding and ability, and is withal of a good and excellent disposition, is deservedly more esteemed than a lower and lesser being, with the same kind inclination and good will. Indeed, goodness is excellent in whatever subject it be found; it is beauty and excellency itself, and renders all excellent that are possessed of it; and yet more excellent when joined with greatness; as the very same excellent qualities of gold do render the body in which they are inherent more precious, and of greater value, when joined with greater than when with lesser dimensions. And how glorious is the sight to see him who is the great Creator and supreme Lord of heaven and earth, full of condescension, and tender pity and mercy, towards the mean and unworthy! His almighty power, and infinite majesty, and self-sufficiency, render his exceeding love and grace the more surprising. And how do his condescension and compassions endear his majesty, power and dominion, and render those attributes pleasant, that would otherwise be only terrible! Would you not desire that your friend, though great and honorable, be of such condescension and grace, and so to have the way opened to free access to him, that his exaltation above you might not hinder your free enjoyment of his friendship?

And would you choose not only that the infinite greatness and majesty of your friend should be, as it were, mollified and sweetened with condescension and grace; but would you also desire to have your friend in your own nature, that he might he brought nearer to you? Would you choose a friend far above you, and yet as it were upon a level with you too? (Though it be taking with men to have a near and dear friend of superior dignity, yet there is also an inclination in them to have their friend a sharer with them in circumstances.) Thus is Christ. Though he be the great God, yet he has, as it were, brought himself down to be upon a level with you, so as to become man as thou art, that he might

not only be your Lord, but your brother, and that he might be the more fit to be a companion for such a worm of the dust. This is one end of Christ's taking upon him man's nature, that his people might be under advantages for a more familiar converse with him, than the infinite distance of the divine nature would allow of. And upon this account the church longed for Christ's incarnation: Cant. viii. 1, "O that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! When I should find thee without, I would kiss thee, yea, I should not be despised." One design of God in the gospel, is to bring us to make God the object of our undivided respect, that he may engross our regard every way, that whatever natural inclination there is in our souls, he may be the centre of it; that God may be all in all. But there is an inclination in the creature, not only to the adoration of a Lord and Sovereign, but to complacence in some one as a friend, to love and delight in some one that may be conversed with as a companion. And virtue and holiness do not destroy or weaken this inclination of our nature. But so hath God contrived in the affair of our redemption, that a divine person may be the object even of this inclination of our nature. And in order hereto, such a one is come down to us, and has taken our nature, and is become one of us, and calls himself our friend, brother and companion. Psalm cxxii. 8, "For my brethren and companions' sake, will I now say, Peace be within thee."

But is it not enough to invite and encourage to free access to a friend so great and high, that he is one of infinite condescending grace, and also has taken your own nature, and is become man? But would you further, to embolden and win you, have him a man of wonderful meekness and humility? Why, such a one is Christ! He is not only become man for you, but far the meekest and most humble of all men, the greatest instance of these sweet virtues that ever was, or will be. And besides these, he has all other human excellencies in the highest perfection. These, indeed, are no proper addition to his divine excellencies. Christ has no more excellency in his person, since his incarnation, than he had before; for divine excellency is infinite, and cannot be added to: yet his human excellencies are additional manifestations of his glory and excellency to us, and are additional recommendations of him to our esteem and love, who are of finite comprehension. Though his human excellencies are but communications and reflections of his divine; and though this light, as reflected, falls infinitely short of the divine fountain of light in its immediate glory; yet the reflection shines not without its proper advantages, as presented to our view and affection. As the glory of Christ appears in the qualifications of his human nature, it appears to us in excellencies that are of our own kind, that are exercised in our own way and manner, and so, in some respects, are peculiarly fitted to invite our acquaintance and draw our affection. The glory of Christ, as it appears in his divinity, though it be far brighter, yet doth it also more dazzle our eyes, and exceeds the strength or comprehension of our sight: but as it shines in the human excellencies of Christ, it is brought more to a level with our conceptions, and suitableness to our nature and manner, yet retaining a semblance of the same divine beauty, and a savor of the same divine sweetness. But as both divine and human excellencies meet together in Christ, they set off and recommend each other to us. It is what tends to endear the divine and infinite majesty and holiness of Christ to us, that these are attributes of a person that is in our nature, that is one of us, that is become our brother, and is the meekest and humblest of men; it encourages us to look upon these divine perfections, however high and great, yet as what we have some near concern in, and more of a right to, and liberty freely to enjoy. And on the

other hand, how much more glorious and surprising do the meekness, the humility, obedience and resignation, and other human excellencies of Christ appear, when we consider that they are in so great a person, as the eternal Son of God the Lord of heaven and earth!

By your choosing Christ for your friend and portion, you will obtain these two infinite benefits:

1. Christ will give himself to you, with all those various excellencies that meet in him, to your full and everlasting enjoyment. He will ever after treat you as his dear friend; and you shall erelong be where he is, and shall behold his glory, and shall dwell with him, in most free and intimate communion and enjoyment.

When the saints get to heaven, they shall not merely see Christ, and have to do with him as subjects and servants with a glorious and gracious Lord and Sovereign, but Christ will entertain them as friends and brethren. This we may learn from the manner of Christ's conversing with his disciples here on earth: though he was their sovereign Lord, and did not refuse, but required their supreme respect and adoration, yet he did not treat them as earthly sovereigns are wont to do their subjects; he did not keep them at an awful distance; but all along conversed with them with the most friendly familiarity, as a father amongst a company of children, yea, as with brethren. So he did with the twelve, and so he did with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. He told his disciples, that he did not call them servants, but friends; and we read of one of them that leaned on his bosom. And doubtless he will not treat his disciples with less freedom and endearment in heaven: he will not keep them at a greater distance for his being in a state of exaltation; but he will rather take them into a state of exaltation with him. This will be the improvement Christ will make of his own glory, to make his beloved friends partakers with him, to glorify them in his glory, as he says to his Father, John xvii. 22, 23: "And the glory which thou hast given me, have I given them, that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them," &c. We are to consider, that though Christ is greatly exalted, yet he is exalted, not as a private person for himself only, but as his people's head; he is exalted in their name, and upon their account, as the first fruits, and as representing the whole harvest. He is not exalted that he may be at a greater distance from them, but that they may be exalted with him. The exaltation and honor of the head is not to make a greater distance between the head and the members; but the members have the same relation and union with the head they had before, and are honored with the head; and instead of the distance being greater, the union shall be nearer and more perfect. When believers get to heaven, Christ will conform them to himself; as he is set down on his Father's throne, so they shall sit down with him on his throne, and shall in their measure be made like him.

When Christ was going to heaven, he comforted his disciples with that, that after a while, he would come again, and take them to himself, that they might be with him again. And we are not to suppose that when the disciples got to heaven, they found him keeping a greater distance than he used to do. No, doubtless, he embraced them as friends, and welcomed them to his and their Father's house, and to his and their glory. They that had been his friends in this world, that had been together with him here, and had together partaken of sorrows and troubles, are now welcomed by him to rest, and to partake of glory with him. He took them and led them into his chambers, and showed them all his glory; as he prayed, John xvii. 24: "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me, that they may behold the glory which

thou hast given me." And he led them to his living fountains of waters and made them partake of his delights; as he prays, John xvii. 13, "That my joy may be fulfilled in themselves;" and set them down with him at his table in his kingdom, and made them partake with him of his dainties, according to his promise, Luke xxii. 30, and led them into his banqueting house, and made them to drink new wine with him in the kingdom of his heavenly Father; as he foretold them when he instituted the Lord's Supper, Matt. xxvi. 29.

Yea, the saints' conversation with Christ in heaven shall not only be as intimate, and their access to him as free, as of the disciples on earth, but in many respects much more so: for in heaven, that vital union shall be perfect, which is exceeding imperfect here. While the saints are in this world, there are great remains of sin and darkness, to separate or disunite them from Christ, which shall then all be removed. This is not a time for that full acquaintance, and those glorious manifestations of love which Christ designs for his people hereafter; which seems to be signified by Christ's speech to Mary Magdalene, when ready to embrace him, when she met him after his resurrection, John xx. 17: "Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father."

When the saints shall see Christ's glory and exaltation in heaven, it will indeed possess their hearts with the greater admiration and adoring respect, but will not awe them into any separation, but will serve only to heighten their surprise and joy, when they find Christ condescending to admit them to such intimate access, and so freely and fully communicating himself to them.

So that if we choose Christ for our friend and portion, we shall hereafter be so received to him, that there shall be nothing to hinder the fullest enjoyment of him, to the satisfying the utmost cravings of our souls. We may take our full swing at gratifying our spiritual appetite after these holy pleasures. Christ will then say, as in Cant. v. 1, "Eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." And this shall be our entertainment to all eternity! There shall never be any end of this happiness, or any thing to interrupt our enjoyment of it, or in the least to molest us in it!

2. By your being united to Christ, you will have a more glorious union with, and enjoyment of God the Father, than otherwise could be. For, hereby the saints' relation to God becomes much nearer; they are the children of God in a higher manner than otherwise could be. For, being members of God's own natural Son, they are in a sort partakers of his relation to the Father: they are not only sons of God by regeneration, but by a kind of communion in the sonship of the eternal Son. This seems to be intended, Gal. iv. 4, 5, 6: "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that are under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."—The church is the daughter of God, not only as he hath begotten her by his word and Spirit, but as she is the spouse of his eternal Son.

So we, being members of the Son, are partakers in our measure of the Father's love to the Son, and complacence in him. John xvii. 23, "I in them, and thou in me.—Thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me." And verse 26, "That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them." And chapter xvi. 27, "The Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God." So we shall, according to our capacities, be partakers of the Son's enjoyment of God, and have his joy fulfilled in ourselves, John xvii. 13. And by this means we shall come to an immensely

higher, more intimate, and full enjoyment of God, than otherwise could have been. For there is doubtless an infinite intimacy between the Father and the Son; which is expressed by his being in the bosom of the Father. And saints being in him, shall, in their measure and manner, partake with him in it, and the blessedness of it.

And thus is the affair of our redemption ordered, that thereby we are obliged to an immensely more exalted kind of union with God, and enjoyment of him, both the Father and the Son, than otherwise could have been. For, Christ being united to the human nature, we have advantage for a more free and full enjoyment of him, than we could have had if he had remained only in the divine nature. So again, we being united to a divine person, as his members, can have a more intimate union and intercourse with God the Father, who is only in the divine nature, than otherwise could be. Christ, who is a divine person, by taking on him our nature, descends from the infinite distance and height above us, and is brought nigh to us; whereby we have advantage for the full enjoyment of him. And, on the other hand, we, by being in Christ, a divine person, do as it were ascend up to God, through the infinite distance, and have hereby advantage for the full enjoyment of him also.

This was the design of Christ to bring it to pass, that he, and his Father, and his people might all be united in one. John xvii. 21, 22, 23, "That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou hast given me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." Christ has brought it to pass that those that the Father has given should be brought into the household of God; that he and his Father, and his people, should be, as it were, one society, one family; that the church should be as it were admitted into the society of the blessed Trinity.

SERMON VIII.

THE FINAL JUDGMENT: OR THE WORLD JUDGED RIGHTEOUSLY BY JESUS CHRIST.

ACTS xvii. 31.—Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained.

Introduction.

THESE words are a part of the speech which Paul made in Mars' hill, a place of concourse of the judges and learned men of Athens. Athens was the principal city of that part of Greece which was formerly a commonwealth by itself, and was the most noted place in the whole world for learning, philosophy, and human wisdom; and it continued so for many ages; till at length the Romans having conquered Greece, its renown from that time began to diminish; and Rome having borrowed learning of it, began to rival it in science, and in the polite and civil arts. However, it was still very famous in the days of Christ and the apostles, and was a place of concourse for wise and learned men.

Therefore, when Paul came thither, and began to preach concerning Jesus Christ, a man who had lately been crucified at Jerusalem (as in the 18th verse), the philosophers thronged about him, to hear what he had to say. The strangeness of his doctrine excited their curiosity; for they spent their time in endeavoring to find out new things, and valued themselves greatly upon their being the authors of new discoveries, as we are informed in verse 21 They despised his doctrine in their hearts, and esteemed it very ridiculous, calling the apostle a babbler; for the preaching of Christ crucified was to the Greeks foolishness, 1 Cor. i. 22. Yet the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers, two different sects, had a mind to hear what the babbler had to say.

Upon this Paul rises up in the midst of them, and makes a speech; and as he speaks to philosophers and men of learning, he speaks quite differently from his common mode of address. There is evidently, in his discourse, a greater depth of thought, more philosophical reasoning, and a more elevated style, than are to be found in his ordinary discourses to common men. His speech is such as was likely to draw the attention and gain the assent of philosophers. He shows himself to be no babbler, but a man who could offer such reason, as they, however they valued themselves upon their wisdom, were not able to gainsay. His practice here is agreeable to what he saith of himself, 1 Cor ix. 22, "That he became all things to all men, that he might by all means save some." He not only to the weak became as weak, that he might gain the weak; but to the wise he became as wise, that he might gain the wise.

In the first place, he reasons with them concerning their worship of idols. He declares to them the true God, and points out how unreasonable it is to suppose, that he delights in such superstitious worship. He begins with this, because they were most likely to hearken to it, as being so evidently agreeable to the natural light of human reason, and also agreeable to what some of their own poets and philosophers had said, verse 28. He begins not immediately to tell them about Jesus Christ, his dying for sinners, and his resurrection from the dead; but first draws their attention with that to which they were more likely to hearken; and then, having thus introduced himself, he proceeds to speak concerning Jesus Christ

He tells them, the times of this ignorance concerning the true God, in which they had hitherto been, God winked at; he suffered the world to lie in heathenish darkness; but now the appointed time was come, when he expected *men should everywhere repent*; "because he had appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained." As an enforcement to the duty of turning to God from their ignorance, superstition, and idolatry, the apostle brings in this, that God had appointed such a day of judgment. And as a proof of this, he brings the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

Concerning the words of the text, we may observe,

That in them the apostle speaks of the general judgment: *He will judge the* WORLD.—The time when this shall be, on the appointed day: *He hath appointed a day.*—How the world is to be judged: *In righteousness.*—The man by whom it is to be judged: *Christ Jesus whom God raised from the dead.*

DOCTRINE.

There is a day coming, in which there will be a general righteous judgment of the whole world, by Jesus Christ.

In speaking upon this subject, I shall show, that God is the Supreme Judge of the world. That there is a time coming, when God will, in the most public and solemn manner, judge the whole world. That the person by whom he will judge it is Jesus Christ. That the transactions of that day will be greatly interesting and truly awful. That all shall be done in righteousness. And finally, I shall take notice of those things which shall be immediately consequent upon the judgment.

SECTION I.

God is the Supreme Judge of the world.

1. God is so by *right*. He is by right the supreme and absolute ruler and disposer of all things, both in the natural and moral world. The rational, understanding part of the creation is indeed subject to a different sort of government from that to which irrational creatures are subject. God governs the sun, moon and stars; he governs even the motes of dust which fly in the air. Not a hair of our heads falleth to the ground without our heavenly Father. God also governs the brute creatures; by his providence, he orders, according to his own decrees, all events concerning those creatures. And rational creatures are subject to the same sort of government; all their actions, and all events relating to them, being ordered by superior providence, according to absolute decrees; so that no event that relates to them ever happens without the disposal of God, according to his own decrees. The rule of this government is God's wise decree, and nothing else.

But rational creatures, because they are intelligent and voluntary agents, are the subjects of another kind of government. They are so only with respect to those of their actions, in which they are *causes by counsel*, or with respect to their voluntary actions. The government of which I now speak is called *moral* government, and consists in two things, in giving laws, and in judging.

God is, with respect to this sort of government, by right the sovereign *ruler* of the world. He is possessed of this right by reason of his infinite greatness

and excellency, by which he merits, and is perfectly and solely fit for, the office of supreme ruler. He that is so excellent as to be infinitely worthy of the highest respect of the creature, hath thereby a right to that respect; he deserves it by a merit of condignity; so that it is injustice to deny it to him. And he that is perfectly wise and true, and is only so regarded, hath a right in every thing to be regarded, and to have his determinations attended to and obeyed.

God hath also a right to the character of supreme ruler, by reason of the absolute dependence of every creature on him. All creatures, and rational creatures no less than others, are wholly derived from him, and every moment are wholly dependent upon him for being, and for all good: so that they are properly his possession. And as, by virtue of this, he hath a right to give his creatures whatever rules of conduct he pleases, or whatever rules are agreeable to his own wisdom; so the mind and will of the creature ought to be entirely conformed to the nature and will of the Creator, and to the rules he gives, that are expressive of it.

For the same reason, he hath a right to *judge* their actions and conduct, and to fulfil the sanction of his law. He who hath an absolute and independent right to give laws, hath evermore the same right to judge those to whom the laws are given. It is absolutely necessary that there should be a judge of reasonable creatures; and sanctions, or rewards and punishments, annexed to rules of conduct, are necessary to the being of laws. A person may instruct another without sanctions, but not give laws. However, these sanctions themselves are vain, are as good as none, without a judge to determine the execution of them As God hath a right to be judge, so he hath a right to be the *supreme* judge. and none hath a right to reverse his judgment, to receive appeals from him, or to say to him, Why judgest thou thus?

2. God is, *in fact*, the supreme judge of the world. He hath power sufficient to vindicate his own right. As he hath a right which cannot be disputed, so he hath power which cannot be controlled. He is possessed of omnipotence wherewith to maintain his dominion over the world; and he doth maintain his dominion in the moral as well as the natural world. Men may refuse subjection to God as a lawgiver; they may shake off the yoke of his laws by rebellion; yet they cannot withdraw themselves from his judgment. Although they will not have God for their lawgiver, yet they shall have him for their judge The strongest of creatures can do nothing to control God, or to avoid him while acting in his judicial capacity. He is able to bring them to his judgment-seat, and is also able to execute the sentence which he shall pronounce.

There was once a notable attempt made by opposition of power entirely to shake off the yoke of the moral government of God, both as lawgiver, and as judge. This attempt was made by the angels, the most mighty of creatures; but they miserably failed in it: God notwithstanding acted as their judge in casting those proud spirits out of heaven, and binding them in chains of darkness unto a further judgment, and a further execution. "God is wise in heart and mighty in strength; who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?" Job ix. 4. Wherein the enemies of God deal proudly, he is above them. He ever hath acted as judge in bestowing what rewards, and inflicting what punishments, he pleased on the children of men. And so he doth still; he is daily fulfilling the promises and threatenings of the law, in disposing of the souls of the children of men, and so he evermore will act.

God acteth as judge towards the children of men more especially,

1. In man's particular judgment at death. Then the sentence is executed, and the reward bestowed *in part*; which is not done without a judgment. The

soul, when it departs from the body, appears before God to be disposed of by him, according to his law. But by this appearing before God, to be judged at death, we need understand no more than this, that the soul is made immediately sensible of the presence of God, God manifesting himself immediately to the soul, with the glory and majesty of a judge; that the sins of the wicked, and the righteousness of the saints, are brought by God to the view of their consciences, so that they know the reason of the sentence given, and their consciences are made to testify to the justice of it; and that thus the will of God for the fulfilment of the law, in their reward or punishment, is made known to them and executed. This is undoubtedly done at every man's death.

2. In the great and general judgment, when all men shall together appear before the judgment-seat to be judged: and which judgment will be much more solemn, and the sanctions of the law will to a further degree be fulfilled.—But this brings me to another branch of the subject.

SECTION II.

That there is a time coming when God will, in the most public and solemn manner, judge the whole world of mankind.

The doctrine of a general judgment is not sufficiently discoverable by the light of nature. Indeed some of the heathens had some obscure notions concerning a future judgment. But the light of nature, or mere unassisted reason, was not sufficient to instruct the world of fallen men in this doctrine. It is one of the peculiar doctrines of revelation, a doctrine of the gospel of Jesus Christ. There were indeed some hints of it in the Old Testament, as in Psal. xcvi. 13: "The Lord cometh to judge the world with righteousness, and his people with his truth." And Eccl. xii. 14, "For God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." And in some other such like passages. But this doctrine is with abundantly the greatest clearness revealed in the New Testament: there we have it frequently and particularly declared and described with its circumstances.

However, although it be a doctrine of revelation, and be brought to light by the gospel, the brightest and most glorious revelation that God hath given to the world; yet it is a doctrine which is entirely agreeable to reason, and of which reason gives great confirmation. That there will be a time before the dissolution of the world, when the inhabitants of it shall stand before God, and give an account of their conduct; and that God will in a public manner, by a general and just judgment, set all things to rights respecting their moral behaviour, is a doctrine entirely agreeable to reason; which I shall now endeavor to make appear. But I would premise, that what we would inquire into, is not whether all mankind shall be judged by God; for that is a thing that the light of nature clearly teaches, and we have already spoken something of it: but whether it be rational to think that there will be a *public* judgment of all mankind *together*. This I think will appear very rational from the following considerations.

1. Such a judgment will be a more glorious display of God's majesty and dominion; it will be more glorious, because it will be more open, public, and solemn.—Although God now actually exercises the most sovereign dominion over the earth; although he reigns and doth all things according to his own will, ordering all events as seemeth to himself good; and although he is actually judge in the earth, continually disposing of men's souls according to their works; yet he rules after a more hidden and secret manner, insomuch that it is

common among the proud sons of men to refuse acknowledging his dominion Wicked men question the very existence of a God, who taketh care of the world, who ordereth the affairs of it, and judgeth in it; and therefore they cast off the fear of him. Many of the kings and great men of the earth do not suitably acknowledge the God who is above them, but seem to look upon themselves as supreme, and therefore tyrannize over mankind, as if they were in no wise accountable for their conduct. There have been, and now are, many atheistical persons, who acknowledge not God's moral dominion over mankind; and therefore they throw off the yoke of his laws and government. And how great a part of the world is there now, and has there always been, that has not acknowledged that the government of the world belongs to the God of Israel, or to the God of Christians; but has paid homage to other imaginary deities, as though they were their sovereign lords and supreme judges! Over how great a part of the word hath Satan usurped the dominion, and set up himself for God in opposition to the true God!

Now, how agreeable to reason is it, that God, in the winding up of things, when the present state of mankind shall come to a conclusion, should, in the most open and public manner, manifest his dominion over the inhabitants of the earth, by bringing them all, high and low, rich and poor, kings and subjects, together before him to be judged with respect to all that they ever did in the world! That he should thus openly discover his dominion in this world, where his authority hath been so much questioned, denied, and proudly opposed! That those very persons, who have thus denied and opposed the authority of God, should be themselves, with the rest of the world, brought before the tribunal of God! That however God be not now visibly present upon earth, disposing and judging in that visible manner that earthly kings do; yet at the conclusion of the world he should make his dominion visible to all, and with respect to all mankind, so that every eye shall see him, and even they who have denied him shall find, that God is supreme Lord of them, and of the whole world!

2. The end of judgment will be more fully answered by a public and general, than only by a particular and private, judgment. The end for which there is any judgment at all is to display and glorify the righteousness of God; which end is more fully accomplished by calling men to an account, bringing their actions to the trial, and determining their state according to them, the whole world, both angels and men, being present to behold, than if the same things should be done in a more private way. At the day of judgment there will be the most glorious display of the justice of God that ever was made. Then God will appear to be entirely righteous towards every one; the justice of all his moral government will on that day be at once discovered. Then all objections will be removed; the conscience of every man shall be satisfied; the blasphemies of the ungodly will be forever put to silence, and argument will be given for the saints and angels to praise God for ever: Rev. xix. 1, 2, "And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia: Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are his judgments."

3. It is very agreeable to reason, that the irregularities which are so open and manifest in the world, should, when the world comes to an end, be publicly rectified by the supreme governor. The infinitely wise God, who made this world to be a habitation for men, and placed mankind to dwell here, and hath appointed man his end and work, must take care of the order and good government of the world, which he hath thus made. He is not regardless how things proceed here on earth: it would be a reproach to his wisdom, and to the per-

fect rectitude of his nature, to suppose so. This world is a world of confusion; it hath been filled with irregularity and confusion ever since the fall; and the irregularities of it are not only private, relating to the actions of particular persons; but states, kingdoms, nations, churches, cities, and all societies of men in all ages, have been full of public irregularities. The affairs of the world, so far as they are in the hands of men, are carried on in a most irregular and confused manner.

Though justice sometimes takes place, yet how often do injustice, cruelty, and oppression prevail! How often are the righteous condemned, and the wicked acquitted and rewarded! How common is it for the virtuous and pious to be depressed, and the wicked to be advanced! How many thousands of the best men have suffered intolerable cruelties, merely for their virtue and piety and in this world have had no help, no refuge to fly to! The world is very much ruled by the pride, covetousness, and passions of men. Solomon takes much notice of such like irregularities in the present state (in his book of Ecclesiastes), whereby he shows the vanity of the world.

Now, how reasonable is it to suppose, that God, when he shall come and put an end to the present state of mankind, will in an open, public manner, the whole world being present, rectify all these disorders! And that he will bring all things to a trial by a general judgment, in order that those who have been oppressed may be delivered; that the righteous cause may be pleaded and vindicated, and wickedness, which has been approved, honored, and rewarded, may receive its due disgrace and punishment; that the proceedings of kings and earthly judges may be inquired into by him, whose eyes are as a flame of fire; and that the public actions of men may be publicly examined and recompensed according to their desert! How agreeable is it to divine wisdom thus to order things, and how worthy of the supreme governor of the world!

4. By a public and general judgment, God more fully accomplishes the reward he designs for the godly, and the punishment he designs for the wicked. One part of the reward which God intends for his saints, is the honor which he intends to bestow upon them. He will honor them in the most public and open manner, before the angels, before all mankind, and before them that hated them. And it is most suitable that it should be so: it is suitable that those holy, humble souls, that have been hated by wicked men, have been cruelly treated and put to shame by them, and who have been haughtily domineered over, should be openly acquitted, commended and crowned, before all the world.

So one part of the punishment of the ungodly will be the open shame and disgrace which they shall suffer. Although many of them have proudly lifted up their heads in this world, have had a very high thought of themselves, and have obtained outward honor among men; yet God will put them to open shame, by showing all their wickedness and moral filthiness before the whole assembly of angels and men; by manifesting his abhorrence of them, in placing them upon his left hand, among devils and foul spirits; and by turning them away into the most loathsome, as well as most dreadful, pit of hell, to dwell there forever.—Which ends may be much more fully accomplished in a general, than in a particular judgment.

SECTION III.

The world will be judged by Jesus Christ.

The person by whom God will judge the world, is Jesus Christ, God-man. The second person in the Trinity, that same person of whom we read in our

Bibles, who was born of the Virgin Mary, lived in Galilee and Judea, and was at last crucified without the gates of Jerusalem, will come to judge the world both in his divine and human nature, in the same human body that was crucified, and rose again, and ascended up into heaven: Acts i. 11, "This same Jesus that is taken up from you into heaven, shall come in like manner, as ye have seen him go into heaven." It will be his human nature which will then be seen by the bodily eyes of men. However, his divine nature, which is united to the human, will then also be present: and it will be by the wisdom of that divine nature that Christ will see and judge.

Here naturally arises an inquiry, Why is Christ appointed to judge the world rather than the Father or the Holy Ghost? We cannot pretend to know all the reasons of the divine dispensations. God is not obliged to give us an account of them. But so much may we learn by divine revelation, as to discover marvellous wisdom in what he determines and orders with respect to this matter. We learn,

1. That God seeth fit, that he who is in the *human nature*, should be the judge of those who are of the human nature: John v. 27, "And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man." Seeing there is one of the persons of the Trinity united to the human nature, God chooses in all his transactions with mankind, to transact by him. He did so of old, in his discoveries of himself to the patriarchs, in giving the law, in leading the children of Israel through the wilderness, and in the manifestations he made of himself in the tabernacle and temple; when, although Christ was not actually incarnate, yet he was so in design, it was ordained and agreed in the covenant of redemption, that he should become incarnate. And since the incarnation of Christ, God governs both the church and the world by Christ. So he will also at the end *judge* the world by him. All men shall be judged by God, and yet at the same time by one invested with their own nature.

God seeth fit, that those who have bodies, as all mankind will have at the day of judgment, should see their judge with their bodily eyes, and hear him with their bodily ears. If one of the other persons of the Trinity had been appointed to be the judge, there must have been some extraordinary outward appearance made on purpose to be a token of the divine presence, as it was of old, before Christ was incarnate. But now there is no necessity of that: now one of the persons of the Trinity is actually incarnate, so that God by him may appear to bodily eyes without any miraculous visionary appearance.

2. Christ hath this honor of being the judge of the world given him, as a *suitable reward* for his sufferings. This is a part of Christ's exaltation. The exaltation of Christ is given him in reward for his humiliation and sufferings. This was stipulated in the covenant of redemption; and we are expressly told, it was given him in reward for his sufferings, Phil. ii. 8—12: "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

God seeth meet, that he who appeared in such a low estate amongst mankind, without form or comeliness, having his divine glory veiled, should appear amongst men a second time, in his own proper majesty and glory, without a veil; to the end that those who saw him here at the first, as a poor, frail man, not having where to lay his head, subject to much hardship and affliction, may see

him the second time in power and great glory, invested with the glory and dignity of the absolute Lord of heaven and earth; and that he who once tabernacled with men, and was despised and rejected of them, may have the honor of arraigning all men before his throne, and judging them with respect to their eternal state! John v. 22—24.

God seeth meet that he who was once arraigned before the judgment-seat of men, and was there most vilely treated, being mocked, spit upon, and condemned, and who was at last crucified, should be rewarded, by having those very persons brought to his tribunal, that they may see him in glory, and be confounded; and that he may have the disposal of them for all eternity; as Christ said to the high priest while arraigned before him, Matt. xxvi. 64, "Hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

3. It is needful that Christ should be the judge of the world, in order that he may *finish* the work of redemption. It is the will of God, that he who is the redeemer of the world should be a *complete* redeemer; and that therefore he should have the whole work of redemption left in his hands. Now, the redemption of fallen man consists not merely in the impetration of redemption, by obeying the divine law, and making atonement for sinners, or in preparing the way for their salvation, but it consists in a great measure, and is actually fulfilled, in converting sinners to the knowledge and love of the truth, in carrying them in the way of grace and true holiness through life, and in finally raising their bodies to life, in glorifying them, in pronouncing the blessed sentence upon them, in crowning them with honor and glory in the sight of men and angels, and in completing and perfecting their reward. Now, it is necessary that Christ should do this, in order to his finishing the work which he hath begun. Raising the saints from the dead, judging them, and fulfilling the sentence, is part of their salvation; and therefore it was necessary that Christ should be appointed judge of the world, in order that he might *finish* his work. (John vi. 39, 40, chap. v. 25—31.) The redemption of the bodies of the saints is part of the work of redemption; the resurrection to life is called a redemption of their bodies, Rom. viii. 23.

It is the will of God, that Christ himself should have the fulfilling of that for which he died, and for which he suffered so much. Now the end for which he suffered and died was the complete salvation of his people: and this shall be obtained at the last judgment, and not before. Therefore it was necessary that Christ be appointed judge, in order that he himself might fully accomplish the end for which he had both suffered and died. When Christ had finished his appointed sufferings, God did, as it were, put the purchased inheritance into his hands, to be kept for believers, and be bestowed upon them at the day of judgment.

4. It was proper that he who is appointed king of the church should rule till he should have put all his enemies under his feet; in order to which, he must be the judge of his *enemies*, as well as of his people. One of the offices of Christ, as redeemer, is that of a king; he is appointed king of the church, and head over all things to the church; and in order that his kingdom be complete, and the design of his reign be accomplished, he must *conquer* all his enemies, and then he will deliver up the kingdom to the Father: 1 Cor. xv. 24, 25, "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power. For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet." Now, when Christ shall have brought his enemies, who had denied, opposed

and rebelled against him, to his judgment-seat, and shall have passed and executed sentence upon them, this will be a final complete *victory* over them, a victory which shall put an end to the war. And it is proper that he who at present reigns, and is carrying on the war against those who are of the opposite kingdom, should have the honor of obtaining the victory, and finishing the war.

5. It is for the abundant *comfort of the saints* that Christ is appointed to be their judge. The covenant of grace, with all its circumstances, and all those events to which it hath relation, is every way so contrived of God, as to give strong consolation to believers: for God designed the gospel for a glorious manifestation of his grace to them; and therefore every thing in it is so ordered, as to manifest the most grace and mercy.

Now, it is for the abundant consolation of the saints, that their own Redeemer is appointed to be their judge; that the same person who spilled his blood for them hath the determination of their state left with him; so that they need not doubt but that they shall have what he was at so much cost to procure.

What matter of joy to them will it be at the last day, to lift up their eyes, and behold the person in whom they have trusted for salvation, to whom they have fled for refuge, upon whom they have built as their foundation for eternity, and whose voice they have often heard, inviting them to himself for protection and safety, coming to judge them.

6. That Christ is appointed to be the judge of the world, will be for the more abundant *conviction of the ungodly*. It will be for their conviction, that they are judged and condemned by that very person whom they have rejected, by whom they might have been saved, who shed his blood to give them an *opportunity* to be saved, who was wont to offer his righteousness to them, when they were in their state of trial, and who many a time called and invited them to come to him, that they might be saved. How justly will they be condemned by him whose salvation they have rejected, whose blood they have despised, whose many calls they have refused, and whom they have pierced by their sins!

How much will it be for their conviction, when they shall hear the sentence of condemnation pronounced, to reflect with themselves, How often hath this same person, who now passes sentence of condemnation upon me, called me, in his word, and by his messengers, to accept of him, and to give myself to him! How often hath he knocked at the door of my heart! and had it not been for my own folly and obstinacy, how might I have had him for my *Saviour*, who is now my incensed *Judge*!

SECTION IV

Christ's coming, the resurrection, the judgment prepared, the books opened, the sentence pronounced and executed.

1. Christ Jesus will, in a most magnificent manner, descend from heaven with all the holy angels. The man Christ Jesus is now in the heaven of heavens, or, as the apostle expresses it, *far above all heavens*, Eph. iv. 10. And there he hath been ever since his ascension, being there enthroned in glory, in the midst of millions of angels and blessed spirits. But when the time appointed for the day of judgment shall have come, notice of it will be given in those happy regions, and Christ will descend to the earth, attended with all those heavenly hosts, in a most solemn, awful, and glorious manner. Christ will come with divine majesty, he will come in the glory of the Father: Matt. xvi. 27, "For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels."

We can now conceive but little of the holy and awful magnificence in which

Christ will appear, as he shall come in the clouds of heaven, or of the glory of his retinue. How mean and despicable, in comparison with it, is the most splendid appearance that earthly princes can make! A glorious visible light will shine round about him, and the earth, with all nature, will tremble at his presence. How vast and innumerable will that host be which will appear with him! Heaven will be for the time deserted of its inhabitants.

We may argue the glory of Christ's appearance, from his appearance at other times. When he appeared in transfiguration, his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. The apostle Peter long after spake of this appearance in magnificent terms: 2 Pet. i. 16, 17, "We were eye-witnesses of his majesty; for he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory." And his appearance to St. Paul, at his conversion, and to St. John, as related in Rev. i. 13, &c., were very grand and magnificent. But we may conclude, that his appearance at the day of judgment will be vastly more so than either of these, as the occasion will be so much greater. We have good reason to think, that our nature, in the present frail state, could not bear the appearance of the majesty in which he will then be seen.

We may argue the glory of his appearance, from the appearances of some of the angels to men; as of the angel that appeared at Christ's sepulchre, after his resurrection, Matt. xxviii. 3: "His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow." The angels will doubtless all of them make as glorious an appearance at the day of judgment, as ever any of them have made on former occasions. How glorious, then, will be the retinue of Christ, made up of so many thousands of such angels! and how much more glorious will Christ, the judge himself, appear, than those his attendants! Doubtless their God will appear immensely more glorious than they.

Christ will thus descend into our air, to such a distance from the surface of the earth, that every one, when all shall be gathered together, shall see him: Rev. i. 7, "Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him."

Christ will make his appearance suddenly, and to the great surprise of the inhabitants of the earth. It is therefore compared to a cry at midnight, by which men are wakened in a great surprise.

2. At the sound of the last trumpet, the dead shall rise, and the living shall be changed. As soon as Christ is descended, the last trumpet shall sound, as a notification to all mankind to appear; at which mighty sound shall the dead be immediately raised, and the living changed: 1 Cor. xv. 52, "For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." Matt. xxiv. 31, "And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet." 1 Thess. iv. 16, "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." There will be some great and remarkable signal given for the rising of the dead, which it seems will be some mighty sound, caused by the angels of God, who shall attend on Christ.

Upon this all the dead shall rise from their graves; all, both small and great, who have lived upon earth since the foundation of the world; those who died before the flood, and those who were drowned in the flood, all that have died since that time, and that shall die to the end of the world. There will be a great moving upon the face of the earth, and in the waters, in bringing bone to his bone, in opening graves, and bringing together all the scattered particles of dead bodies. The earth shall give up the dead that are in it, and the sea shall give up the dead that are in it.

However the parts of the bodies of many are divided and scattered; however many have been burnt, and their bodies have been turned to ashes and smoke, and driven to the four winds; however many have been eaten of wild beasts, of the fowls of heaven, and the fishes of the sea; however many have consumed away upon the face of the earth, and great part of their bodies have ascended in exhalations; yet the all-wise and all-powerful God can immediately bring every part to his part again.

Of this vast multitude some shall rise to life, and others to condemnation. John v. 28, 29, "All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

When the bodies are prepared, the departed souls shall again enter into their bodies, and be reunited to them, never more to be separated. The souls of the wicked shall be brought up out of hell, though not out of misery, and shall very unwillingly enter into their bodies, which will be but eternal prisons to them. Rev. xx. 13, "And death and hell delivered up the dead that were in them." They shall lift their eyes full of the utmost amazement and horror to see their awful Judge. And perhaps the bodies with which they shall be raised will be most filthy and loathsome, thus properly corresponding to the inward, moral turpitude of their souls.

The souls of the righteous shall descend from heaven together with Christ and his angels: 1 Thess. iv. 14, "Them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." They also shall be reunited to their bodies, that they may be glorified with them. They shall receive their bodies, prepared by God to be mansions of pleasure to all eternity. They shall be every way fitted for the uses, the exercises, and delights of perfectly holy and glorified souls. They shall be clothed with a superlative beauty, similar to that of Christ's glorious body: Phil. iii. 21, "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." Their bodies shall rise incorruptible, no more liable to pain or disease, and with an extraordinary vigor and vivacity, like that of those spirits that are as a flame of fire. 1 Cor. xv. 43, 44, "It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." With what joy will the souls and bodies of the saints meet, and with what joy will they lift up their heads out of their graves to behold the glorious sight of the appearing of Christ! And it will be a glorious sight to see those saints arising out of their graves, putting off their corruption, and putting on incorruption and glory.

At the same time, those that shall then be alive upon the earth shall be changed. Their bodies shall pass through a great change, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye: 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52, "Behold, I show you a great mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump." The bodies of the wicked then living will be changed into such hideous things, as shall be answerable to the loathsome souls that dwell in them, and such as shall be prepared to receive and administer eternal torments without dissolution. But the bodies of the righteous shall be changed into the same glorious and immortal form in which those that shall be raised will appear.

3 They shall all be brought to appear before Christ, the godly being placed on the right hand, the wicked on the left, Matt. xxv. 31, 32, 33. The wicked, however unwilling, however full of fear and horror, shall be brought or driven before the judgment-seat. However they may try to hide themselves, and for this purpose creep into dens and caves of the mountains, and cry to the

mountains to fall on them, and hide them from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; yet there shall not one escape; to the judge they must come, and stand on the left hand with devils. On the contrary, the righteous will be joyfully conducted to Jesus Christ, probably by the angels. Their joy will, as it were, give them wings to carry them thither They will with ecstasies and raptures of delight meet their friend and Saviour, come into his presence, and stand at his right hand.

Besides the one standing on the right hand and the other on the left, there seems to be this difference between them, that when the dead in Christ shall be raised, they will all be caught up into the air, where Christ shall be, and shall be there at his right hand during the judgment, never more to set their feet on this earth. Whereas the wicked shall be left standing on the earth, there to abide the judgment. 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17, "The dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

And what a vast congregation will there be of all the men, women, and children that shall have lived upon earth from the beginning to the end of the world! Rev. xx. 12, "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God."

4. The next thing will be, that the books shall be opened: Rev. xx. 12, "I saw the dead, great and small, stand before God; and the books were opened." Which books seem to be these two, the book of God's remembrance, and the book of Scripture; the former as the evidence of their deeds which are to be judged, the latter as the rule of judgment. The works both of the righteous and of the wicked will be brought forth, that they may be judged according to them, and those works will be tried according to the appointed and written rule.

(1.) The works of both righteous and wicked will be rehearsed. The book of God's remembrance will be first opened. The various works of the children of men are, as it were, written by God in a book of remembrance. Mal. iii. 16, "A book of remembrance was written before him." However ready ungodly men may be to make light of their own sins, and to forget them; yet God never forgetteth any of them: neither doth God forget any of the good works of the saints. If they give but a cup of cold water with a spirit of charity, God remembers it.

The evil works of the wicked shall then be brought forth to light. They must then hear of all their profaneness, their impenitence, their obstinate unbelief, their abuse of ordinances, and various other sins. The various aggravations of their sins will also be brought to view, as how this man sinned after such and such warnings, that after the receipt of such and such mercies; one after being so and so favored with outward light, another after having been the subject of inward conviction, excited by the immediate agency of God. Concerning these sins, they shall be called to account to see what answer they can make for themselves: Matt. xii. 36, "But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." Rom. xiv. 12, "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."

The good works of the saints will also be brought forth as evidences of their sincerity, and of their interest in the righteousness of Christ. As to their evil works, they will not be brought forth against them on that day; for the guilt of them will not lie upon them, they being clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

The Judge himself will have taken the guilt of their sins upon him; therefore their sins will not stand against them in the book of God's remembrance. The account of them will appear to have been cancelled before that time. The account that will be found in God's book will not be of debt, but of credit. God cancels their debts, and sets down their good works, and is pleased, as it were, to make himself a debtor for them, by his own gracious act.

Both good and bad will be judged according to their works: Rev. xx. 12, "And the dead were judged out of those things that were found written in the books, according to their works;" and ver. 13, "And they were judged every man according to their works." Though the righteous are justified by faith, and not by their works; yet they shall be judged *according to* their works: their works shall be brought forth as the evidence of their faith. Their faith on that great day shall be tried by its fruits. If the works of any man shall have been bad, if his life shall appear to have been unchristian, they will condemn him, without any further inquiry. But if his works, when they shall be examined, prove good and of the right sort, he shall surely be justified. They will be declared as a sure evidence of his having believed in Jesus Christ, and of his being clothed with his righteousness.

But by works we are to understand all voluntary exercises of the faculties of the soul; as for instance, the words and conversation of men, as well as what is done with their hands: Matt. xii. 37, "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." Nor are we to understand only outward acts, or the thoughts outwardly expressed, but also the thoughts themselves, and all the inward workings of the heart. Man judgeth according to the outward appearance, but God judgeth the heart: Rev. ii. 23, "I am he that searcheth the heart and the reins, and I will give unto every one of you according to his works." Nor will only positive sins be brought into judgment, but also omissions of duty, as is manifest by Matt. xxv. 42, &c., "For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink," &c.

On that day secret and hidden *wickedness* will be brought to light. All the uncleanness, injustice, and violence, of which men have been guilty in secret, shall be manifest both to angels and men. Then it will be made to appear, how his and that man have indulged themselves in wicked imaginations, in lascivious, covetous, malicious, or impious desires and wishes; and how others have harbored in their hearts enmity against God and his law; also impenitency and unbelief, notwithstanding all the means used with them, and motives set before them, to induce them to repent, return, and live.

The *good works* of the saints also, which were done in secret, shall then be made public, and even the pious and benevolent affections and designs of their hearts; so that the real and secret characters of both saints and sinners shall then be most clearly and publicly displayed.

(2.) The book of Scripture will be opened, and the works of men will be tried by that touchstone. Their works will be compared with the word of God. That which God gave men for the rule of their action while in this life, shall then be made the rule of their judgment. God hath told us beforehand, what will be the rule of judgment. We are told in the Scriptures upon what terms we shall be justified, and upon what terms we shall be condemned. That which God hath given us to be our rule in our lives, he will make his own rule in judgment.

The rule of judgment will be twofold. The *primary* rule of judgment will be the law. The law ever hath stood, and ever will stand in force, as a rule

of judgment, for those to whom the law was given: Matt. v. 18, "For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." The law will so far be made the rule of judgment, that not one person at that day shall by any means be justified or condemned, in a way inconsistent with that which is established by the law. As to the wicked, the law will be so far the rule of judgment respecting them, that the sentence denounced against them will be the sentence of the law. The righteous will be so far judged by the law, that although their sentence will not be the sentence of the law, yet it will by no means be such a sentence as shall be inconsistent with the law, but such as it allows: for it will be by the righteousness of the law that they shall be justified.

It will be inquired concerning every one, both righteous and wicked, whether the law stands against him, or whether he hath a fulfilment of the law to show. As to the *righteous*, they will have fulfilment to show; they will have it to plead, that the judge himself hath fulfilled the law for them; that he hath both satisfied for their sins, and fulfilled the righteousness of the law for them: Rom. x. 4, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." But as to the wicked, when it shall be found, by the book of God's remembrance, that they have broken the law, and have no fulfilment of it to plead, the sentence of the law shall be pronounced upon them.

A *secondary* rule of judgment will be the gospel, or the covenant of grace, wherein it is said, "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned:" Rom. ii. 16, "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel." By the gospel, or covenant of grace, eternal blessedness will be adjudged to believers. When it shall be found that the law hinders not, and that the curse and condemnation of the law stands not against them, the reward of eternal life shall be given them, according to the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ.

5. The sentence will be pronounced. Christ will say to the wicked on the left hand, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." How dreadful will these words of the judge be to the poor, miserable, despairing wretches on the left hand! How amazing will every syllable of them be! How will they pierce them to the soul! These words show the greatest wrath and abhorrence. Christ will bid them *depart;* he will send them away from his presence, will remove them forever far out of his sight, into an everlasting separation from God, as being most loathsome, and unfit to dwell in his presence, and enjoy communion with him.

Christ will call them *cursed; Depart, ye cursed,* to whom everlasting wrath and ruin belong; who are by your own wickedness prepared for nothing else, but to be firebrands of hell; who are the fit objects and vessels of the vengeance and fury of the Almighty. *Into fire:* he will not send them away merely into a loathsome prison, the receptacle of the filth and rubbish of the universe; but into a furnace of fire; that must be their dwelling-place, there they must be tormented with the most racking pain and anguish. It is *everlasting* fire; there is eternity in the sentence, which infinitely aggravates the doom, and will make every word of it immensely more dreadful, sinking, and amazing to the souls that receive it. *Prepared for the devil and his angels:* this sets forth the greatness and intenseness of the torments, as the preceding part of the sentence does the duration. It shows the dreadfulness of that fire to which they shall be condemned, that it is the same that is prepared for the devils, those foul spirits and great enemies of God. Their condition will be the same as that of the devils, in many respects; particularly as they must burn in the fire for ever.

This sentence will doubtless be pronounced in such an awful manner as shall be a terrible manifestation of the wrath of the judge. There will be divine, holy, and almighty wrath manifested in the countenance and voice of the judge; and we know not what other manifestations of anger will accompany the sentence. Perhaps it will be accompanied with thunders and lightnings, far more dreadful than were on mount Sinai at the giving of the law. Correspondent to these exhibitions of divine wrath, will be the appearances of terror and most horrible amazement in the condemned. How will all their faces look pale! How will death sit upon their countenances, when those words shall be heard! What dolorous cries, shrieks, and groans! What trembling, and wringing of hands, and gnashing of teeth, will there then be!

But with the most benign aspect, in the most endearing manner, and with the sweetest expressions of love, will Christ invite his saints on his right hand to glory; saying, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." He will not bid them to go from him, but *to come with him;* to go where he goes; to dwell where he dwells; to enjoy him, and to partake with him. He will call them *blessed*, blessed of *his Father*, blessed by him whose blessing is infinitely the most desirable, namely, Gon. *Inherit the kingdom:* they are not only invited to go with Christ, and to dwell with him, but to inherit a kingdom with him; to sit down with him on his throne, and to receive the honor and happiness of a heavenly kingdom. "Prepared for you from the foundation of the world:" this denotes the sovereign and eternal love of God, as the source of their blessedness. He puts them in mind, that God was pleased to set his love upon them, long before they had a being, even from eternity; that therefore God made heaven on purpose for them, and fitted it for their delight and happiness.

6. Immediately after this, the sentence will be executed, as we are informed, Matt. xxv. 46: "These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal." When the words of the sentence shall have once proceeded out of the mouth of the judge, then that vast and innumerable throng of ungodly men shall go away, shall be driven away, shall be necessitated to go away with devils, and shall with dismal cries and shrieks be cast into the great furnace of fire prepared for the punishment of devils, the perpetual thunders and lightnings of the wrath of God following them. Into this furnace they must in both soul and body enter, never more to come out. Here they must spend eternal ages in wrestling with the most excruciating torments, and in crying out in the midst of the most dreadful flames, and under the most insupportable wrath.

On the other hand, the righteous shall ascend to heaven with their glorified bodies, in company with Christ, his angels, and all that host which descended with him; they shall ascend in the most joyful and triumphant manner, and shall enter with Christ into that glorious and blessed world, which had for the time been empty of its creature inhabitants. Christ having given his church that perfect beauty, and crowned it with that glory, honor, and happiness, which were stipulated in the covenant of redemption before the world was, and which he died to procure for them; and having made it a truly glorious church, every way complete, will present it before the Father, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. Thus shall the saints be instated in everlasting glory, to dwell there with Christ, who shall feed them, and lead them to living fountains of water, to the full enjoyment of God, and to an eternity of the most holy, glorious, and joyful employments.

SECTION. V.

All will be done in righteousness.

Christ will give to every man his due, according to a most righteous rule. Those who shall be condemned, will be most justly condemned; will be condemned to that punishment which they shall most justly deserve; and the justice of God in condemning them will be made most evident. Now the justice of God in punishing wicked men, and especially in the degree of their punishment, is often blasphemously called in question. But it will be made clear and apparent to all; their own consciences will tell them that the sentence is just, and all cavils will be put to silence.

So those that shall be justified, shall be most justly adjudged to eternal life. Although they also were great sinners, and deserved eternal death; yet it will not be against justice or the law to justify them; they will be in Christ. But the acquitting of them will be but giving the reward merited by Christ's righteousness: Rom. iii. 26, "That God may be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."

Christ will judge the world in righteousness, particularly as he will give to every one a *due proportion* either of reward or punishment, according to the various characters of those who shall be judged. The punishment shall be duly proportioned to the number and aggravations of the sins of the wicked; and the rewards of the righteous shall be duly proportioned to the number of their holy acts and affections, and also to the degree of virtue implied in them.—I would observe further,

1. That Christ cannot fail of being just in judging, through *mistake*. He cannot take some to be sincere and godly, who are not so, nor others to be hypocrites, who are really sincere. His eyes are as a flame of fire, and he searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins of the children of men. He can never err in determining what is justice in particular cases, as human judges often do. Nor can he be blinded by prejudices, as human judges are very liable to be: Deut. x. 17, "He regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward." It is impossible he should be deceived by the excuses, and false colors, and pleas of the wicked, as human judges very commonly are. It is equally impossible that he should err, in assigning to every one his proper proportion of reward or punishment, according to his wickedness or good works. His knowledge being infinite, will effectually guard him against all these, and other such errors.

2. He cannot fail of judging righteously through an *unrighteous* disposition; for he is infinitely just and holy in his nature: Deut: xxxii. 4, "He is the rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he." It is not possible that an infinitely powerful, self-sufficient being should be under any temptation to injustice. Nor is it possible that an infinitely wise being, who knoweth all things, should not choose justice. For he who perfectly knows all things, perfectly knows how much more amiable justice is than injustice; and therefore must choose it.

SECTION. VI.

Those things which will immediately follow the day of judgment.

1. After the sentence shall have been pronounced, and the saints shall have ascended with Christ into glory, this world will be dissolved by fire: the conflagration will immediately succeed the judgment. When an end shall have

been put to the present state of mankind, this world, which was the place of their habitation during that state, will be destroyed, there being no further use for it. This earth, which had been the stage upon which so many scenes had been acted, upon which there had been so many great and famous kingdoms and large cities; where there had been so many wars, so much trade and business carried on for so many ages; shall then be destroyed. These continents, these islands, these seas and rivers, these mountains and valleys, shall be seen no more at all: all shall be destroyed by devouring flames. This we are plainly taught in the word of God, 2 Pet. iii. 7: "But the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men." Ver. 10, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burnt up." Ver. 12, "Looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat."

Both the misery of the wicked and the happiness of the saints will be increased, beyond what shall be before the judgment. The misery of the wicked will be increased, as they will be tormented not only in their souls, but also in their bodies, which will be prepared both to receive and administer torment to their souls. There will doubtless then be the like connection between soul and body, as there is now; and therefore the pains and torments of the one will affect the other. And why may we not suppose that their torments will be increased as well as those of the devils? Concerning them we are informed (Jam. ii. 19,) that they believe there is one God, and tremble in the belief; expecting no doubt that he will inflict upon them, in due time, more severe torments than even those which they now suffer. We are also informed that they are bound "in chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; *and* unto the judgment of the great day" (2 Pet. ii. 4, and Jude 6); which implies that their full punishment is not yet executed upon them, but that they are now reserved as prisoners in hell, to receive their just recompense on the day of judgment. Hence it was that they thought Christ was *come to torment them before the time*, Matt. viii. 29. Thus the punishment neither of wicked men nor devils will be complete before the final judgment.

No more will the happiness of the saints be complete before that time. Therefore we are in the New Testament so often encouraged with promises of the resurrection of the dead, and of the day when Christ shall come the second time. These things are spoken of as the great objects of the expectation and hope of Christians. A state of separation of soul and body is to men an unnatural state. Therefore when the bodies of the saints shall be raised from the dead, and their souls shall be again united to them, as their state will be more natural, so doubtless it will be more happy. Their bodies will be *glorious* bodies, and prepared to administer as much to their happiness, as the bodies of the wicked will be to administer to their misery.

We may with good reason suppose the accession of happiness to the souls of the saints will be great, since the occasion is represented as the marriage of the church, and the Lamb: Rev. xix. 7, "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." Their joy will then be increased, because they will have new arguments of joy. The body of Christ will then be perfect, the church will be complete; all the parts of it will have come into existence, which will not be the case before the end of the world; no parts of it will be under sin or affliction: all the members of it will be in a perfect

state; and they shall all be together by themselves, none being mixed with ungodly men. Then the church will be as a bride adorned for her husband, and therefore she will exceedingly rejoice.

Then also the Mediator will have fully accomplished his work. He will then have destroyed, and will triumph over, all his enemies. Then Christ will have fully obtained his reward, and fully accomplished the design which was in his heart from all eternity. For these reasons Christ himself will greatly rejoice, and his members must needs proportionably rejoice with him. Then God will have obtained the end of all the great works which he hath been doing from the beginning of the world. All the designs of God will be unfolded in their events; then his marvellous contrivance in his hidden, intricate, and inexplicable works will appear, the ends being obtained. Then the works of God being perfected, the divine glory will more abundantly appear. These things will cause a great accession of happiness to the saints, who shall behold them. Then God will have fully glorified himself, his Son, and his elect; then he will see that all is very good, and will entirely rejoice in his own works. At the same time the saints also, viewing the works of God brought thus to perfection, will rejoice in the view, and receive from it a large accession of happiness.

Then God will make more abundant manifestations of his glory, and of the glory of his Son; then he will more plentifully pour out his Spirit, and make answerable additions to the glory of the saints, and by means of all these will so increase the happiness of the saints, as shall be suitable to the commencement of the ultimate and most perfect state of things, and to such a joyful occasion, the completion of all things. In this glory and happiness will the saints remain forever and ever.

SECTION. VII.

The uses to which this doctrine is applicable.

I. The *first use* proper to be made of this doctrine is of *instruction*. Hence many of the mysteries of Divine Providence may be unfolded. There are many things in the dealings of God towards the children of men, which appear very mysterious, if we view them without having an eye to this last judgment, which yet, if we consider this judgment, have no difficulty in them. As,

1. That God suffers the wicked to live and prosper in the world. The infinitely holy and wise Creator and Governor of the world must necessarily hate wickedness; yet we see many wicked men spreading themselves as a green bay-tree; they live with impunity; things seem to go well with them, and the world smiles upon them. Many who have not been fit to live, who have held God and religion in the greatest contempt, who have been open enemies to all that is good, who by their wickedness have been the pests of mankind; many cruel tyrants, whose barbarities have been such as would even fill one with horror to hear or read of them; yet have lived in great wealth and outward glory, have reigned over great and mighty kingdoms and empires, and have been honored as a sort of earthly gods.

Now, it is very mysterious, that the holy and righteous Governor of the world, whose eye beholds all the children of men, should suffer it so to be, unless we look forward to the day of judgment; and then the mystery is unravelled. For although God for the present keeps silence, and seems to let them alone; yet then he will give suitable manifestations of his displeasure against their wickedness; they shall then receive condign punishment. The saints under the Old Testament were much stumbled at these dispensations of

Providence, as you may see in Job ch. xxi., and Psal. lxxiii., and Jer ch. xc. The difficulty to them was so great, because then a future state and a day of judgment were not revealed with that clearness with which they are now.

2. God sometimes suffers some of the best of men to be in great affliction, poverty, and persecution. The *wicked* rule, while *they* are subject; the wicked are the head, and they are the tail; the wicked domineer, while they serve, and are oppressed, yea are trampled under their feet, as the mire of the streets. These things are very common, yet they seem to imply great confusion. When the wicked are exalted to power and authority, and the godly are oppressed by them, things are quite out of joint: Prov. xx. 26, "A righteous man falling down before the wicked, is as a troubled fountain, and a corrupt spring." Sometimes one wicked man makes many hundreds, yea thousands, of precious saints a sacrifice to his lust and cruelty, or to his enmity against virtue and the truth, and puts them to death for no other reason but that for which they are especially to be esteemed and commended.

Now, if we look no further than the present state, these things appear strange and unaccountable. But we ought not to confine our views within such narrow limits. When God shall have put an end to the present state, these things shall all be brought to rights. Though God suffers things to be so for the present, yet they shall not proceed in this course always; comparatively speaking, the present state of things is *but for a moment*. When all shall be settled and fixed by a divine judgment, the righteous shall be exalted, honored, and rewarded, and the wicked shall be depressed and put under their feet. However the wicked now prevail against the righteous, yet the righteous shall at last have the ascendant, shall come off conquerors, and shall see the just vengeance of God executed upon those who now hate and persecute them.

3. It is another mystery of Providence, that God suffers so much public injustice to take place in the world. There are not only private wrongs, which in this state pass unsettled, but many public wrongs, wrongs done by men acting in a public character, and wrongs which affect nations, kingdoms, and other public bodies of men. Many suffer by men in public offices, from whom there is no refuge, from whose decisions there is no appeal. Now it seems a mystery that these things are tolerated, when he that is rightfully the Supreme Judge and Governor of the world is perfectly just; but at the final judgment all these wrongs shall be adjusted, as well as those of a more private nature.

II. Our *second use* of this subject shall be to apply it to the *awakening* of sinners. You that have not the fear of God before your eyes, that are not afraid to sin against him, consider seriously what you have heard concerning the day of judgment. Although these things be now future and unseen, yet they are real and certain. If you now be left to yourselves, if God keep silence, and judgment be not speedily executed, it is not because God is regardless how you live, and how you behave yourselves. Now indeed God is invisible to you, and his wrath is invisible; but at the day of judgment, you yourselves shall see him with your bodily eyes: you shall not then be able to keep out of his sight, or to avoid seeing him: Rev. i. 7, "Behold he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." You shall see him coming in the clouds of heaven; your ears shall hear the last trumpet, that dreadful sound, the voice of the archangel; your eyes shall see your judge sitting on the throne; they shall see those manifestations of wrath which there will be in his countenance; your ears shall hear him pronounce the sentence.

Seriously consider, if you live in the ways of sin, and appear at that day

with the guilt of it upon you, how you will be able to endure the sight or the hearing of these things, and whether horror and amazement will not be likely to seize you, when you shall see the judge descending, and hear the trump of God. What account will you be able to give, when it shall be inquired of you, why you led such a sinful, wicked life? What will you be able to say for yourselves, when it shall be asked, why you neglected such and such particular duties, as the duty of secret prayer, for instance; or why you have habitually practised such and such particular sins or lusts? Although you be so careless of your conduct and manner of life, make so light of sin, and proceed in it so freely, with little or no dread or remorse; yet you must give an account of every sin that you commit, of every idle word that you speak, and of every sinful thought of your hearts. Every time you deviate from the rules of justice, of temperance, or of charity; every time you indulge any lust, whether secretly or openly, you must give an account of it: it will never be forgotten, it stands written in that book which will be opened on that day.

Consider the rule you will be judged by. It is the perfect rule of the divine law, which is exceeding strict, and exceeding broad. And how will you ever be able to answer the demands of this law?—Consider also,

1. That the judge will be your *supreme* judge. You will have no opportunity to appeal from his decision. This is often the case in this world; when we are dissatisfied with the decisions of a judge, we often may appeal to a higher, a more knowing, or a more just judicatory. But no such appeal can be made from our Divine Judge; no such indulgence will be allowed: or if it were allowed, there is no superior judge to whom the appeal should be made. By his decision, therefore, you must abide.

2. The judge will be *omnipotent*. Were he a mere man, like yourselves, however he might judge and determine, you might resist, and by the help of others, if not by your own strength, prevent or elude the execution of the judgment. But the judge being omnipotent, this is utterly impossible. In vain is all resistance, either by yourselves, or by whatever help you can obtain: "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished," Prov. xi. 21. As well might you "set the briers and thorns in battle against God," Isa. xxvii. 4.

3. The judge will be *inexorable*. Human judges may be prevailed upon to reverse their sentence, or at least to remit something of its severity. But in vain will be all your entreaties, all your cries and tears to this effect, with the great Judge of the world. Now indeed he inclines his ear, and is ready to hear the prayers, cries, and entreaties of all mankind; but then the day of grace will be past, and the door of mercy be shut: then although ye spread forth your hands, yet the judge will hide his eyes from you; yea, though ye make many prayers, he will not hear, Isa. i. 15. Then the judge will deal in fury: his eye shall not spare, neither will he have pity: and though ye cry in his ears with a loud voice, yet will he not hear you, Ezek. viii. 18. And you will find no place of repentance in God, though you seek it carefully with tears.

4. The judge at that day will not mix mercy with justice. The time for mercy to be shown to sinners will then be past. Christ will then appear in another character than that of the merciful Saviour. Having laid aside the inviting attributes of grace and mercy, he will clothe himself with justice and vengeance. He will not only, in general, exact of sinners the demands of the law, but he will exact the whole, without any abatement; he will exact the very uttermost farthing, Matt. v. 26. Then Christ will come to fulfil that in Rev. xiv. 10, "The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is

poured out without mixture, into the cup of his indignation." The punishment threatened to ungodly men is *without any pity;* see Ezek. v. 11: "Neither shall mine eye spare; neither will I have any pity." Here all judges have a mixture of mercy; but the wrath of God will be poured out upon the wicked without mixture, and vengeance will have its full weight.

III. I shall apply myself, *thirdly*, to several *different characters* of men.

1. To those who live in secret wickedness. Let such consider, that for all these things God will bring them into judgment. Secrecy is your temptation. Promising yourselves this, you practise many things, you indulge many lusts, under the cover of darkness, and in secret corners, which you would be ashamed to do in the light of the sun, and before the world. But this temptation is entirely groundless. All your secret abominations are even now perfectly known to God, and will also hereafter be made known both to angels and men: Luke xii. 2, 3, "For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness, shall be heard in the light: and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets, shall be proclaimed upon the house-tops."

Before human judges are brought only those things which are known; but before this judge shall be brought the most "hidden things of darkness, and even the counsels of the heart," 1 Cor. iv. 5. All your secret uncleanness, all your secret fraud and injustice, all your lascivious desires, wishes, and designs, all your inward covetousness, which is idolatry, all your malicious, envious, and revengeful thoughts and purposes, whether brought forth into practice or not, shall then be made manifest, and you shall be judged according to them. Of these things, however secret, there will be need of no other evidence than the testimony of God and of your own consciences.

2. To such as are not just and upright in their dealings with their fellow men. Consider, that all your dealings with men must be tried, must be brought forth into judgment, and there compared with the rules of the word of God. All your actions must be judged according to those things which are found written in the book of the word of God. If your ways of dealing with men shall not agree with those rules of righteousness, they will be condemned. Now, the word of God directs us to practise entire justice: "That which is altogether just shalt thou follow," Deut. xvi. 20, and to do to others as we would they should do to us. But how many are there, whose dealings with their fellow-men, if strictly tried by these rules, would not stand the test!

God hath in his word forbidden all deceit and fraud in our dealings one with another, Lev. xi. 13. He hath forbidden us to oppress one another, Lev. xxv. 14. But how frequent are practices contrary to those rules, and which will not bear to be tried by them! How common are fraud and trickishness in trade! How will men endeavor to lead on those with whom they trade in the dark, that so they may make their advantage! Yea, lying in trading is too common a thing among us. How common are such things as that mentioned, Prov. xx. 14, "It is nought, it is nought, saith the buyer; but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth."

Many men will take the advantage of another's ignorance to advance their own gain, to his wrong; yea, they seem not to scruple such practices. Beside downright lying, men have many ways of blinding and deceiving one another in trade, which are by no means right in the sight of God, and will appear to be very unjust, when they shall be tried by the rule of God's word at the day of judgment. And how common a thing is oppression or extortion, in taking any advantage that men can by any means obtain, to get the utmost possible of their neighbor for what they have to dispose of, and their neighbor needs!

Let such consider that there is a God in heaven, who beholds them, and sees how they conduct themselves in their daily traffick with one another; and that he will try their works another day. Justice shall assuredly take place at last. The righteous Governor of the world will not suffer injustice without control; he will control and rectify it, by returning the injury upon the head of the injurer: Matt. vii. 2, "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."

3. To those who plead for the lawfulness of practices generally condemned by God's people. You who do this, consider that your practices must be tried at the day of judgment. Consider, whether or no they are likely to be approved by the most holy Judge at that day: Prov. v. 21, "The ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord; and he pondereth all his goings." However, by your carnal reasonings, you may deceive your own hearts, yet you will not be able to deceive the judge, he will not hearken to your excuses, but will try your ways by the rule; he will know whether they be straight or crooked.

When you plead for these and those liberties which you take, let it be considered, whether they be likely to be allowed of by the judge at the last great day. Will they bear to be tried by his eyes, which are purer than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity?

4. To those who are wont to excuse their wickedness. Will the excuses which you make for yourselves be accepted at the day of judgment? If you excuse yourselves to your own consciences, by saying, that you were under such and such temptations which you could not withstand; that corrupt nature prevailed, and you could not overcome it; that it would have been so and so to your damage, if you had done otherwise; that if you had done such a duty, you would have brought yourselves into difficulty, would have incurred the displeasure of such and such friends, or would have been despised and laughed at; or if you say, you did no more than it was the common custom to do, no more than many godly men have done, no more than certain persons of good reputation now practise, that if you had done otherwise, you would have been singular; if these be your excuses for the sins you commit, or for the duties which you neglect, let me ask you, will they appear sufficient when they shall be examined at the day of judgment?

5. To those who live in impenitence and unbelief. There are some persons who live in no open vice, and perhaps conscientiously avoid secret immorality, who yet live in impenitence and unbelief. They are indeed called upon *to repent and believe the gospel*, to forsake their evil ways and *thoughts*, and to return to God, that he may have mercy on them; to come unto Christ, *laboring*, and *heavy-laden with sin*, that they may obtain *rest* of him; and are assured, that if they *believe, they shall be saved;* and that if they *believe not, they shall be damned;* and all the most powerful motives are set before them, to induce them to comply with these exhortations, especially those drawn from the eternal world; yet they persist in sin, they remain impenitent and unhumbled; they will not come unto Christ, that they may have life.

Now such men shall be brought into judgment for their conduct, as well as more gross sinners. Nor will they be any more able to stand in the judgment than the other. They resist the most powerful means of grace; go on in sin against the clear light of the gospel; refuse to hearken to the kindest calls and invitations; reject the most amiable Saviour, the judge himself; and despise the free offers of eternal life, glory and felicity. And how will they be able to answer for these things at the tribunal of Christ?

IV. If there be a day of judgment appointed, then let all be very strict in

trying their own sincerity. God on that day will discover the secrets of all hearts. The judgment of that day will be like a fire, which burns up whatsoever is not true gold; wood, hay, stubble, and dross, shall be all consumed by the scorching fire of that day. The judge will be like a refiner's fire, and fuller's soap, which will cleanse away all filthiness, however it may be colored over: Mal. iii. 2, "Who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap;" and chap. iv. 1, "For behold the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble, and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts."

There are multitudes of men that wear the guise of saints, appear like saints, and their state, both in their own eyes and in the eyes of their neighbors, is good. They have sheep's clothing. But no disguise can hide them from the eyes of the judge of the world. His eyes are as a flame of fire: they search the hearts and try the reins of the children of men. He will see whether they be sound at heart; he will see from what principles they have acted. A fair show will in no degree deceive him, as it doth men in the present state. It will signify nothing to say, "Lord, we have eaten and drunk in thy presence; and in thy name have we cast out devils, and in thy name have done many wonderful works." It will signify nothing to pretend to a great deal of comfort and joy, and to the experience of great religious affections, and to your having done many things in religion and morality, unless you have some greater evidences of sincerity.

Wherefore let every one take heed that he be not deceived concerning himself; and that he depend not on that which will not bear examination at the day of judgment. Be not contented with this, that you have the judgment of men, the judgment of godly men, or that of ministers, in your favor. Consider that they are not to be your judges at last. Take occasion frequently to compare your hearts with the word of God; that is the rule by which you are to be finally tried and judged. And try yourselves by your works, by which also you must be tried at last. Inquire whether you lead holy, Christian lives, whether you perform universal and unconditional obedience to all God's commands, and whether you do it from a truly gracious respect to God.

Also frequently beg of God, the judge, that he would search you, try you now, and discover you to yourselves, that you may see if you be insincere in religion; and that he would lead you in the way everlasting. Beg of God, that if you be not upon a good foundation, he would unsettle you, and fix you upon the sure foundation. The example of the Psalmist in this is worthy of imitation: Psal. xxvi. 1, 2, "Judge me, O Lord, examine me, and prove me; try my reins and mine heart;" and Psal. cxxxix. 23, 24, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts. And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." God will search us hereafter, and discover what we are, both to ourselves and to all the world; let us pray that he would search us, and discover our hearts to us now. We have need of divine help in this matter; for the heart is deceitful above all things.

V. If God hath appointed a day to judge the world, let us judge and condemn ourselves for our sins. This we must do, if we would not be judged and condemned for them on that day. If we would escape condemnation, we must see that we justly may be condemned; we must be so sensible of our vileness and guilt, as to see that we deserve all that condemnation and punishment which are threatened; and that we are in the hands of God, who is the sovereign disposer of us, and will do with us as seemeth to himself good. Let us

therefore often reflect on our sins, confess them before God, condemn and abhor ourselves, be truly humbled, and repent in dust and ashes.

VI. If these things be so, let us by no means be forward to judge others. Some are forward to judge others, to judge their hearts, both in general and upon particular occasions, to determine as to the principles, motives, and ends of their actions. But this is to assume the province of God, and to set up ourselves as lords and judges. Rom. xiv. 4, "Who art thou, that thou judgest another man's servant?" Jam. iv. 11, "Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law." To be thus disposed to judge and act censoriously towards others, is the way to be judged and condemned ourselves. Matt. vii. 1. 2, "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."

VII. This doctrine affords matter of great consolation to the godly. This day of judgment, which is so terrible to ungodly men, affords no ground of terror to you, but abundant ground of joy and satisfaction. For though you now meet with more affliction and trouble than most wicked men, yet on that day you shall be delivered from all afflictions, and from all trouble. If you be unjustly treated by wicked men, and abused by them, what a comfort is it to the injured, that they may appeal to God, who judgeth righteously! The Psalmist used often to comfort himself with this.

Upon these accounts the saints have reason to love the appearing of Jesus Christ. 2 Tim. iv. 8, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but to all those that love his appearing." This is to the saints a blessed hope. Tit. ii. 13, "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ. This day may well be the object of their eager desire, and when they hear of Christ's coming to judgment they may well say, "Even so come, Lord Jesus," Rev. xxii. 20. It will be the most glorious day that ever the saints saw; it will be so both to those who shall die, and whose souls shall go to heaven, and to those who shall then be found alive on earth: it will be the wedding-day of the church. Surely then in the consideration of the approach of this day, there is ground of great consolation to the saints.

SERMON IX.

THE JUSTICE OF GOD IN THE DAMNATION OF SINNERS

ROMANS III. 19.—That every mouth may be stopped.

THE main subject of the doctrinal part of this epistle, is the free grace of God in the salvation of men by Christ Jesus; especially as it appears in the doctrine of justification by faith alone. And the more clearly to evince this doctrine, and show the reason of it, the apostle, in the first place, establishes that point, that no flesh living can be justified by the deeds of the law. And to prove it, he is very large and particular in showing, that all mankind, not only Gentiles but Jews, are under sin, and so under the condemnation of the law; which is what he insists upon from the beginning of the epistle to this place. He first begins with the Gentiles; and in the first chapter shows that they are under sin, by setting forth the exceeding corruptions and horrid wickedness that overspread the Gentile world: and then through the second chapter, and the former part of this third chapter, to the text and following verse, he shows the same of the Jews, that they are also in the same circumstances with the Gentiles in this regard. They had a high thought of themselves, because they were God's covenant people, and circumcised, and the children of Abraham. They despised the Gentiles as polluted, condemned, and accursed; but looked on themselves, on account of their external privileges, and ceremonial and moral righteousness, as a pure and holy people, and the children of God, as the apostle observes in the second chapter. It was therefore strange doctrine to them, that they also were unclean and guilty in God's sight, and under the condemnation and curse of the law. The apostle does therefore, on account of their strong prejudices against such doctrine, the more particularly insist upon it, and shows that they are no better than the Gentiles; and as in the 9th verse of this chapter, "What then? Are we better than they? No, in no wise; for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin." And to convince them of it, he then produces certain passages out of their own law, or the Old Testament (whose authority they pretend a great regard to), from the 9th verse to the verse wherein is our text. And it may be observed, that the apostle, *first*, cites certain passages to prove that mankind are all corrupt, in the 10th, 11th, and 12th verses: "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable, there is none that doeth good, no, not one." *Secondly*, the passages he cites next, are to prove, that not only all are corrupt, but each one wholly corrupt, as it were all over unclean, from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet; and therefore several particular parts of the body are mentioned, as the throat, the tongue, the lips, the mouth, the feet: verses 13, 14, 15, "Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood." And, *thirdly*, he quotes other passages to show, that each one is not only all over corrupt, but corrupt to a desperate degree, in the 16th, 17th, and 18th verses; in which the exceeding degree of their corruption is shown, both by affirming and denying: by affir-

matively expressing the most pernicious nature and tendency of their wickedness, in the 16th verse: "Destruction and misery are in their ways." And then by denying all good or godliness of them, in the 17th and 18th verses, "And the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes." And then, lest the Jews should think these passages of their law do not concern them, and that only the Gentiles are intended in them, the apostle shows, in the verse of the text, not only, that they are not exempt, but that they especially must be understood: "Now we know that whatsoever things the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law." By those that are under the law is meant the Jews; and the Gentiles by those that are without law; as appears by the 12th verse of the preceding chapter. There is a special reason to understand the law, as speaking to and of them, to whom it was immediately given. And therefore the Jews would be unreasonable in exempting themselves. And if we examine the places of the Old Testament whence these passages are taken, we shall see plainly that special respect is had to the wickedness of the people of that nation, in every one of them. So that the law shuts all up in universal and desperate wickedness, *that every mouth may be stopped;* the mouths of the Jews, as well as of the Gentiles, notwithstanding all those privileges by which they were distinguished from the Gentiles.

The things that the law says, are sufficient to stop the mouths of all mankind, in two respects:

1. To stop them from boasting of their righteousness, as the Jews were wont to do; as the apostle observes in the 23d verse of the preceding chapter.—That the apostle has respect to stopping their mouths in this respect, appears by the 27th verse of the context, "Where is boasting then? It is excluded." The law stops our mouths from making any plea for life, or the favor of God, or any positive good, from our own righteousness.

2. To stop them from making any excuse for ourselves, or objection against the execution of the sentence of the law, or the infliction of the punishment that it threatens. That it is intended, appears by the words immediately following, "That all the world may become guilty before God." That is, that they may appear to be guilty, and stand convicted before God, and justly liable to the condemnation of his law, as guilty of death, according to the Jewish way of speaking.

And thus the apostle proves, that no flesh can be justified in God's sight by the deeds of the law; as he draws the conclusion in the following verse; and so prepares the way for the establishing of the great doctrine of justification by faith alone, which he proceeds to do in the next verse to that, and in the following part of the chapter, and of the epistle.

DOCTRINE.

It is just with God eternally to cast off and destroy sinners.

For this is the punishment which the law condemns to; which the things that the law says, may well stop every mouth from all manner of objection against.

The truth of this doctrine may appear by the joint consideration of two things, viz., man's sinfulness, and God's sovereignty.

I. It appears from the consideration of man's sinfulness. And that whether we consider the infinitely evil nature of all sin, or how much sin men are guilty of.

1 If we consider the infinite evil and heinousness of sin in general, it is not

unjust in God to inflict what punishment is deserved; because the very notion of deserving punishment is, that it may be justly inflicted: a deserved punishment and a just punishment are the same thing. To say that one deserves such a punishment, and yet to say that he does not justly deserve it, is a contradiction; and if he justly deserves it, then it may be justly inflicted.

Every crime or fault deserves a greater or less punishment, in proportion as the crime itself is greater or less. If any fault deserves punishment, then so much the greater the fault, so much the greater is the punishment deserved. The faulty nature of any thing is the formal ground and reason of its desert of punishment; and therefore the more any thing hath of this nature, the more punishment it deserves. And therefore the terribleness of the degree of punishment, let it be never so terrible, is no argument against the justice of it, if the proportion does but hold between the heinousness of the crime and the dreadfulness of the punishment; so that if there be any such thing as a fault infinitely heinous, it will follow that it is just to inflict a punishment for it that is infinitely dreadful.

A crime is more or less heinous, according as we are under greater or less obligations to the contrary. This is self-evident; because it is herein that the criminalness or faultiness of any thing consists, that it is contrary to what we are obliged or bound to, or what ought to be in us. So the faultiness of one being's hating another, is in proportion to his obligation to love him. The crime of one being's despising and casting contempt on another, is proportionably more or less heinous, as he was under greater or less obligations to honor him. The fault of disobeying another, is greater or less, as any one is under greater or less obligations to obey him. And therefore if there be any being that we are under infinite obligations to love, and honor and obey, the contrary towards him must be infinitely faulty.

Our obligations to love, honor, and obey any being, is in proportion to his loveliness, honorableness, and authority; for that is the very meaning of the words. When we say any one is very lovely, it is the same as to say, that he is one very much to be loved: or if we say such a one is more honorable than another, the meaning of the words is, that he is one that we are more obliged to honor. If we say any one has great authority over us, it is the same as to say, that he has great right to our subjection and obedience.

But God is a being infinitely lovely, because he hath infinite excellency and beauty. To have infinite excellency and beauty, is the same thing as to have infinite loveliness. He is a Being of infinite greatness, majesty, and glory; and therefore is infinitely honorable. He is infinitely exalted above the greatest potentates of the earth, and highest angels in heaven; and therefore is infinitely more honorable than they. His authority over us is infinite; and the ground of his right to our obedience is infinitely strong: for he is infinitely worthy to be obeyed in himself, and we have an absolute, universal, and infinite dependence upon him.

So that sin against God, being a violation of infinite obligations, must be a crime infinitely heinous, and so deserving of infinite punishment.—Nothing is more agreeable to the common sense of mankind, than that sins committed against any one, must be heinous proportionably to the dignity of the being offended and abused; as it is also agreeable to the word of God: 1 Sam. ii. 25, "If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him;" (i. e., shall judge him, and inflict a finite punishment, such as finite judges can inflict;) "but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him?" This was the aggravation of sin that made Joseph afraid of it: Gen. xxxix. 9, "How shall I com

mit this great wickedness, and sin against God?" This was the aggravation of David's sin, in comparison of which he esteemed all others as nothing, because they were infinitely exceeded by it. Psalm li. 4, "Against thee, thee only have I sinned."—The eternity of the punishment of ungodly men renders it infinite; and it renders it no more than infinite, and therefore no more than proportionable to the heinousness of what they are guilty.

If there be any evil or faultiness in sin against God, there is certainly infinite evil: for if it be any fault at all, it has an infinite aggravation, viz., that it is against an infinite object. If it be ever so small upon other accounts, yet if it be any thing, it has one infinite dimension; and so is an infinite evil. Which may be illustrated by this: if we suppose a thing to have infinite length, but no breadth and thickness, but to be only a mere mathematical line, it is nothing; but if it have any breadth and thickness at all, though never so small, yet if it have but one infinite dimension, viz., that of length, the quantity of it is infinite; it exceeds the quantity of any thing, however broad, thick and long, wherein these dimensions are all finite.

So that the objections that are made against the infinite punishment of sin, from the necessity, or rather previous certainty of the futurition of sin, arising from the decree of God, or unavoidable original corruption of nature, if they argue any thing, do not argue against the infiniteness of the degree of the faultiness of sin directly, and no otherwise than they argue against any faultiness at all: for if this necessity or certainty leaves any evil at all in sin, that fault must be infinite by reason of the infinite object.

But every such objector as would argue from hence, that there is no fault at all in sin, confutes himself, and shows his own insincerity in his objection. For at the same time that he objects, that men's acts are necessary, from God's decrees, and original sin, and that this kind of necessity is inconsistent with faultiness in the act, his own practice shows that he does not believe what he objects to be true: otherwise why does he at all blame men? Or why are such persons at all displeased with men, for abusive, injurious, and ungrateful acts towards them? Whatever they pretend, by this they show that indeed they do believe that there is no necessity in men's acts, from divine decrees, or corruption of nature, that is inconsistent with blame. And if their objection be this, that this previous certainty is by God's own ordering, and that where God orders an antecedent certainty of acts, he transfers all the fault from the actor on himself; their practice shows, that at the same time they do not believe this, but fully believe the contrary: for when they are abused by men, they are displeased with men, and not with God only.

The light of nature teaches all mankind, that when an injury is voluntary, it is faulty, without any manner of consideration of what there might be previously to determine the futurition of that evil act of the will. And it really teaches this as much to those that object and cavil most as to others; as their universal practice shows. By which it appears, that such objections are insincere and perverse. Men will mention others' corrupt nature in their own case, or when they are injured, as a thing that aggravates their crime, and that wherein their faultiness partly consists. How common is it for persons, when they look on themselves greatly injured by another, to inveigh against him, and aggravate his baseness, by saying, "He is a man of a most perverse spirit: he is naturally of a selfish, niggardly, or proud and haughty temper: he is one of a base and vile disposition." And yet men's natural, corrupt dispositions are mentioned as an excuse for them, with respect to their sins against God, and as if they rendered them blameless.

2. That it is just with God eternally to cast off wicked men, may more abundantly appear, if we consider how much sin they are guilty of. From what has been already said, it appears, that if men were guilty of sin but in one particular, that is sufficient ground of their eternal rejection and condemnation: if they are sinners, that is enough: merely this might be sufficient to keep them from ever lifting up their heads, and cause them to smite on their breasts, with the publican that cried "God be merciful to me a sinner." But sinful men are not only thus, but they are full of sin; full of principles of sin, and full of acts of sin: their guilt is like great mountains, heaped one upon another, till the pile is grown up to heaven. They are totally corrupt, in every part, in all their faculties, and all the principles of their nature, their understandings, and wills; and in all their dispositions and affections, their heads, their hearts, are totally depraved; all the members of their bodies are only instruments of sin; and all their senses, seeing, hearing, tasting, &c., are only inlets and outlets of sin, channels of corruption. There is nothing but sin, no good at all. Rom. vii. 18, "In me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing." There is all manner of wickedness. There are the seeds of the greatest and blackest crimes. There are principles of all sorts of wickedness against men; and there is all wickedness against God. There is pride; there is enmity; there is contempt; there is quarrelling; there is atheism; there is blasphemy. There are these things in exceeding strength; the heart is under the power of them, is sold under sin, and is a perfect slave to it. There is hardheartedness, hardness greater than that of a rock, or an adamant stone. There is obstinacy and perverseness, incorrigibleness and inflexibleness of sin, that will not be overcome by threatenings or promises, by awakenings or encouragements, by judgments or mercies, neither by that which is terrifying, nor that which is winning: the very blood of God will not win the heart of a wicked man.

And there is actual wickedness without number or measure. There are breaches of every command, in thought, word, and deed; a life full of sin; days and nights filled up with sin; mercies abused, and frowns despised; mercy and justice, and all the divine perfections, trampled on; and the honor of each person in the Trinity trod in the dirt. Now if one sinful word or thought has so much evil in it, as to deserve eternal destruction, how do they deserve to be eternally cast off and destroyed, that are guilty of so much sin!

II. If with man's sinfulness, we consider God's sovereignty, it may serve further to clear God's justice in the eternal rejection and condemnation of sinners, from men's cavils and objections. I shall not now pretend to determine precisely, what things are, and what things are not, proper acts and exercises of God's holy sovereignty; but only, that God's sovereignty extends to the following things.

1. That such is God's sovereign power and right, that he is originally under no obligation to keep men from sinning; but may in his providence permit and leave them to sin. He was not obliged to keep either angels or men from falling. It is unreasonable to suppose, that God should be obliged, if he makes a reasonable creature capable of knowing his will, and receiving a law from him, and being subject to his moral government, at the same time to make it impossible for him to sin, or break his law. For if God be obliged to this, it destroys all use of any commands, laws, promises or threatenings, and the very notion of any moral government of God over those reasonable creatures. For to what purpose would it be, for God to give such and such laws, and declare his holy will to a creature, and annex promises and threatenings to move him to his duty, and make him careful to perform it, if the creature at the same

time has this to think of, that God is obliged to make it impossible for him to break his laws? How can God's threatenings move to care or watchfulness, when, at the same time, God is obliged to render it impossible that he should be exposed to the threatenings? Or, to what purpose is it for God to give a law at all? For, according to this supposition, it is God, and not the creature, that is under the law. It is the lawgiver's care, and not the subject's, to see that his law is obeyed; and this care is what the lawgiver is absolutely obliged to. If God be obliged never to permit a creature to fall, there is an end of all divine laws, or government, or authority of God over the creature; there can be no manner of use of these things.

God may permit sin, though the being of sin will certainly ensue on that permission: and so, by permission, he may dispose and order the event. If there were any such thing as chance, or mere contingence, and the very notion of it did not carry a gross absurdity (as might easily be shown that it does), it would have been very unfit, that God should have left it to mere chance, whether man should fall or no. For, chance, if there should be any such thing, is undesigning and blind. And certainly it is more fit that an event of so great importance, and that is attended with such an infinite train of great consequences, should be disposed and ordered by infinite wisdom, than that it should be left to blind chance.

If it be said, that God need not have interposed to render it impossible for man to sin, and yet not leave it to mere contingence or blind chance neither; but might have left it with man's free will, to determine whether to sin or no; I answer, if God did leave it to man's free will, without any sort of disposal, or ordering in the case, whence it should be previously certain how that free will should determine, then still that first determination of the will must be merely contingent or by chance. It could not have any antecedent act of the will to determine it; for I speak now of the very first act or motion of the will, respecting the affair that may be looked upon as the prime ground and highest source of the event. To suppose this to be determined by a foregoing act is a contradiction. God's disposing this determination of the will by his permission, does not at all infringe the liberty of the creature: it is in no respect any more inconsistent with liberty, than mere chance or contingence. For if the determination of the will be from blind, undesigning chance, it is no more from the agent himself, or from the will itself, than if we suppose, in the case, a wise, divine disposal by permission.

2. It was fit that it should be at the ordering of the divine wisdom and good pleasure, whether every particular man should stand for himself, or whether the first father of mankind should be appointed as the moral and federal head and representative of the rest. If God has not liberty in this matter to determine either of these two as he pleases, it must be because determining that the first father of men should represent the rest, and not that every one should stand for himself, is injurious to mankind. For if it be not injurious to mankind, how is it unjust? But it is not injurious to mankind; for there is nothing in the nature of the case itself, that makes it better for mankind that each man should stand for himself, than that all should be represented by their common father; as the least reflection or consideration will convince any one. And if there be nothing in the nature of the thing that makes the former better for mankind than the latter, then it will follow, that mankind are not hurt in God's choosing and appointing the latter, rather than the former; or, which is the same thing, that it is not injurious to mankind.

3. When men are fallen, and become sinful, God by his sovereignty has a

right to determine about their redemption as he pleases. He has a right to determine whether he will redeem any or no. He might, if he had pleased, have left all to perish, or might have redeemed all. Or, he may redeem some, and leave others; and if he doth so, he may take whom he pleases, and leave whom he pleases. To suppose that all have forfeited his favor, and deserved to perish, and to suppose that he may not leave any one individual of them to perish, implies a contradiction; because it supposes that such a one has a claim to God's favor, and is not justly liable to perish; which is contrary to the supposition.

It is meet that God should order all these things according to his own pleasure. By reason of his greatness and glory, by which he is infinitely above all, he is worthy to be sovereign, and that his pleasure should in all things take place: he is worthy that he should make himself his end, and that he should make nothing but his own wisdom his rule in pursuing that end, without asking leave or counsel of any, and without giving any account of any of his matters. It is fit that he that is absolutely perfect, and infinitely wise, and the fountain of all wisdom, should determine every thing by his own will, even things of the greatest importance, such as the eternal salvation or damnation of sinners. It is meet that he should be thus sovereign, because he is the first being, the eternal being, whence all other beings are. He is the Creator of all things; and all are absolutely and universally dependent on him; and therefore it is meet that he should act as the sovereign possessor of heaven and earth.

APPLICATION.

In the improvement of this doctrine, I would first direct myself to sinners that are afraid of damnation, in a use of conviction. This may be matter of conviction to you, that it would be just and righteous with God eternally to reject and destroy you. This is what you are in danger of: you that are a Christless sinner are a poor condemned creature: God's wrath still abides upon you; and the sentence of condemnation lies upon you: you are in God's hands, and it is uncertain what he will do with you. You are afraid what will become of you: you are afraid that it will be your portion to suffer eternal burnings; and your fears are not without grounds; you have reason to tremble every moment. But let you be never so much afraid of it, let eternal damnation be never so dreadful, yet it is just: God may nevertheless do it, and be righteous, and holy, and glorious in it. Though eternal damnation be what you cannot bear, and how much soever your heart shrinks at the thoughts of it, yet God's justice may be glorious in it. The dreadfulness of the thing on your part, and the greatness of your dread of it, do not render it the less righteous on God's part. If you think otherwise, it is a sign that you do not see yourself, that you are not sensible what sin is, nor how much of it you have been guilty of.

Therefore for your conviction, be directed,

First, To look over your past life: inquire at the mouth of conscience, and hear what that has to testify concerning it. Consider what you are, what light you have had, and what means you have lived under; and yet how have you behaved yourself! What have those many days and nights, that you have lived, been filled up with? How have those years, that have rolled over your heads, one after another, been spent? What has the sun shone upon you for, from day to day, while you have improved his light to serve Satan by it? What has God kept your breath in your nostrils for, and given you meat and drink, from day to day for, that you have spent that life and strength that have been supported by them, in opposing God and rebellion against him?

How many sorts of wickedness have you been guilty of! How manifold have been the abominations of your life! What profaneness and contempt of God has been exercised by you! How little regard have you had to the Scriptures, to the word preached, to Sabbaths, and sacraments! How profanely have you talked, many of you about those things that are holy! After what manner have many of you kept God's holy day, not regarding the holiness of the time, not caring what you thought of in it! Yea, you have not only spent the time in worldly, vain, and unprofitable thoughts, but in immoral thoughts; pleasing yourself with the reflection of past acts of wickedness, and in contriving new acts. Have not you spent much holy time in gratifying your lusts in your imaginations; yea, not only holy time, but the very time of God's public worship, when you have appeared in God's more immediate presence! How have you not only not attended to the worship, but have in the mean time been feasting your lusts, and wallowing yourself in abominable uncleanness! How many Sabbaths have you spent, one after another, in a most wretched manner! Some of you not only in worldly and wicked thoughts, but also a very wicked outward behavior! When you on Sabbath days have got along with your wicked companions, how has holy time been treated among you! What kind of conversation has there been! Yea, how have some of you, by a very indecent carriage, openly dishonored and cast contempt on the sacred services of God's house, and holy day! And what you have done some of you alone, what wicked practices there have been in secret, even in holy time, God and your own consciences know.

And how have you behaved yourself in the time of family prayer! And what a trade have many of you made of absenting yourselves from the worship of the families you belong to, for the sake of vain company! And how have you continued in the neglect of secret prayer! Wherein wilfully living in a known sin, going abreast against as plain a command as any in the Bible! Have you not been one that has cast off fear, and restrained prayer before God?

What wicked carriage have some of you been guilty of towards your parents! How far have you been from paying that honor to them that God has required! Have you not even harbored ill will and malice towards them? And when they have displeased you, have wished evil to them? Yea, and shown your vile spirit in your behavior? And it is well if you have not mocked them behind their backs; and like the cursed Ham and Canaan, derided your parents' nakedness instead of covering it, and hiding your eyes from it. Have not some of you often disobeyed your parents, yea, and refused to be subject to them? It is a wonder of mercy and forbearance, that that has not before now been accomplished on you, Prov. xxxi. 17, "The eye that mocketh at his father, and refuseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it."

What revenge and malice have you been guilty of towards your neighbors! How have you indulged this spirit of the devil, hating others, and wishing evil to them, rejoicing when evil befel them, and grieving at others' prosperity, and lived in such a way for a long time! Have not some of you allowed a passionate, furious spirit, and behaved yourselves in anger, more like wild beasts than like Christians?

What covetousness has been in many of you! Such has been your inordinate love of the world, and care about the things of it, that it has taken up your heart; you have minded the world more than your eternal salvation. For the vanities of the world you have neglected reading, praying and meditation: for the things of the world, you have broken the Sabbath: for the world you have

spent a great deal of your time in quarrelling: for the world you have envied and hated your neighbor: for the world you have cast God, and Christ, and heaven, behind your back: for the world you have sold your own soul: you have, as it were, drowned your soul in worldly cares and desires: you have been a mere earthworm, that is never in its element but when grovelling and buried in the earth.

How much of a spirit of pride has appeared in you, which is in a peculiar manner the spirit and condemnation of the devil! How have some of you vaunted yourselves in your apparel! Others in their riches! Others in their knowledge and abilities! How has it galled you to see others above you! How much has it gone against the grain for you to give others their due honor! And how have you shown your pride by setting up your wills, and in opposing others, and stirring up and promoting division, and a party spirit in public affairs!

How sensual have you been! Are there not some here that have debased themselves below the dignity of human nature, by wallowing in sensual filthiness, as swine in the mire, or as filthy vermin feeding with delight on rotten carrion? What intemperance have some of you been guilty of! How much of your precious time have you spent at the tavern, and in drinking companies, when you ought to have been at home seeking God and your salvation in your families and closets!

And what abominable lasciviousness have some of you been guilty of! How have you indulged yourself from day to day, and from night to night, in all manner of unclean imaginations! Has not your soul been filled with them, till it has become a hold of foul spirits, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird? What foul-mouthed persons have some of you been, often in lewd and lascivious talk and unclean songs, wherein were things not fit to be spoken! And such company, where such conversation has been carried on, has been your delight. And what unclean acts and practices have you defiled yourself with! God and your consciences know what abominable lasciviousness you have practised in things not fit to be named, when you have been alone; when you ought to have been reading or meditating, or on your knees before God in secret prayer. And how have you corrupted others, as well as polluted yourselves! What vile uncleanness have you practised in company! What abominations have you been guilty of in the dark! Such as the apostle doubtless had respect to in Eph. v. 12, "For it is a shame even to speak of those things that are done of them in secret." Some of you have corrupted others, and done what in you lay to undo their souls (if you have not actually done it); and by your vile practices and examples have made room for Satan, and invited his presence, and established his interest, in the town where you have lived.

What lying have some of you been guilty of, especially in childhood! And have not your heart and lips often disagreed since you came to riper years? What fraud, and deceit, and unfaithfulness, have many of you practised in your dealings with your neighbors that your own heart is conscious to, if you have not been noted for it by others!

And how have some of you behaved yourselves in your family relations! How have you neglected your children's souls! And not only so, but have corrupted their minds by your bad examples; and instead of training them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, have rather brought them up in the devil's service!

How have some of you attended that sacred ordinance of the Lord's supper without any manner of serious preparation, and in a careless, slighty frame

of spirit, and chiefly to comply with custom! Have you not ventured to put the sacred symbols of the body and blood of Christ into your mouth, while at the same time you lived in ways of known sins, and intended no other than still to go on in the same wicked practices? And, it may be, have sat at the Lord's table with rancor in your heart against some of your brethren you have sat there with. You have come even to that holy feast of love among God's children, with the leaven of malice and envy in your heart; and so have eat and drank judgment to yourself.

What stupidity and sottishness has attended your course of wickedness; which has appeared in your obstinacy under awakening dispensations of God's word and providence! And how have some of you backslidden after you have set out in religion, and quenched God's Spirit after he had been striving with you! And what unsteadiness, and slothfulness, and great misimprovment of God's strivings with you, have you been chargeable with, that have long been subjects of them!

Now, can you think when you have thus behaved yourself, that God is obliged to show you mercy? Are you not, after all this, ashamed to talk of its being hard with God to cast you off? Does it become one that has lived such a life, to open his mouth to excuse himself, or object against God's justice in his condemnation, or to complain of it as hard in God not to give him converting and pardoning grace, and make him his child, and bestow on him eternal life! Or to talk of his duties and great pains in religion, and such like things, as if such performances were worthy to be accepted, and to draw God's heart to such a creature! If this has been your manner, does it not show how little you have considered yourself, and how little a sense you have had of your own sinfulness?

Secondly, Be directed to consider, if God should eternally reject and destroy you, what an agreeableness and exact mutual answerableness there would be between God's so dealing with you, and your spirit and behavior. There would not only be an equality, but a similitude. God declares, that his dealings with men shall be suitable to their disposition and practice. Psalm xviii. 25, 26, "With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful; with an upright man, thou wilt show thyself upright; with the pure, thou wilt wilt show thyself pure; and with the froward, thou wilt show thyself froward." How much soever you dread damnation, and are affrighted and concerned at the thoughts of it; yet if God should indeed eternally damn you, you would but be met with in your own way; you would be dealt with exactly according to your own dealing: God would but measure to you in the same measure in which you mete. Surely it is but fair that you should be made to buy in the same measure in which you sell.

Here I would particularly show, 1. That if God should eternally destroy you, it would be agreeable to your treatment of God. 2. That it would be agreeable to your treatment of Jesus Christ. 3. That it would be agreeable to your behavior towards your neighbors. 4. That it would be according to your own foolish behavior towards yourself.

I. If God should forever cast you off, it would be exactly agreeable to your treatment of him. That you may be sensible of this, consider,

1. You never have exercised the least degree of love to God; and therefore it would be agreeable to your treatment of him if he should never express any love to you. When God converts and saves a sinner, it is a wonderful and unspeakable manifestation of divine love. When a poor lost soul is brought home to Christ, and has all his sins forgiven him, and is made a child of God, it will take up a whole eternity to express and declare the greatness of that love.

And why should God be obliged to express such wonderful love to you, who never exercised the least degree of love to him in all your life? You never have loved God, who is infinitely glorious and lovely; and why then is God under obligation to love you, who are all over deformed and loathsome as a filthy worm, or rather a hateful viper? You have no benevolence in your heart towards God; you never rejoiced in God's happiness; if he had been miserable, and that had been possible, you would have liked it as well as if he were happy; you would not have cared how miserable he was, nor mourned for it, any more than you now do for the devil's being miserable: and why then should God be looked upon as obliged to take so much care for your happiness, as to do such great things for it, as he doth for those that are saved? Or why should God be called hard, in case he should not be careful to save you from misery? You care not what becomes of God's glory; you are not distressed how much soever his honor seems to suffer in the world: and why should God care any more for your welfare? Has it not been so, that if you could but promote your private interest, and gratify your own lusts, you cared not how much the glory of God suffered? And why may not God advance his own glory in the ruin of your welfare, not caring how much your interest suffers by it? You never so much as stirred one step, sincerely making the glory of God your end, or acting from real respect to him: and why then is it hard if God do not such great things for you, as the changing your nature, raising you from spiritual death to life, conquering the powers of darkness for you, translating you out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his dear Son, delivering you from eternal misery, and bestowing eternal glory upon you? You do not use to be willing to deny yourself for God; you never cared to put yourself out of your way for Christ: whenever any thing cross or difficult came in your way, that the glory of God was concerned in, it has been your manner to shun it, and excuse yourself from it: you did not care to hurt yourself for Christ, that you did not see worthy of it: and why then must it be looked upon as such a hard and cruel thing, if Christ has not been pleased to spill his blood and be tormented to death for such a sinner?

2. You have slighted and made light of God; and why then may not God justly slight you? When sinners are sensible in some measure of their misery, they are ready to think it hard that God will not take more notice of them; that he will see them in such a lamentable distressed condition, beholding their burdens and tears, and seem to slight it, and manifest no pity to them. Their souls they think are precious: it would be a dreadful thing if they should perish, and burn in hell forever. They do not see through it, that God should make so light of their salvation. But then, ought they not to consider, that as their souls are precious, so is God's honor precious? The honor of the infinite God, the great King of heaven and earth, is a thing of as great importance (and surely may justly be so esteemed by God), as the happiness of you, a poor little worm. But yet you have slighted that honor of God, and valued it no more than the dirt under your feet. You have been told that such and such things were contrary to the will of a holy God, and against his honor; but you cared not for that. God called upon you, and exhorted you to be more tender of his honor; but you went on without regarding him. Thus have you slighted God! And yet, is it hard that God should slight you? Are you more honorable than God, that he must be obliged to make much of you, how light soever you make of him and his glory?

And you have not only slighted God in time past, but you slight him still. You indeed now make a pretence and show of honoring him in your prayers, and

attendance on other external duties, and by a sober countenance, and seeming devoutness in your words and behavior; but it is all mere dissembling. That downcast look and seeming reverence, is not from any honor you have to God in your heart, though you would have it go so, and would have God take it so. You that have not believed in Christ, have not the least jot of honor to God; that show of it is merely forced and what you are driven to by fear, like those mentioned in Psalm lxvi. 3, "Through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves to thee." In the original it is, "shall lie unto thee;" that is, yield feigned submission, and dissemble respect and honor to thee. There is a rod held over you that makes you seem to pay such respect to God. This religion and devotion, even the very appearance of it, would soon be gone, and all vanish away, if that were removed. Sometimes it may be you weep in your prayers, and in your hearing sermons, and hope God will take notice of it, and take it for some honor; but he sees it to be all hypocrisy. You weep for yourself; you are afraid of hell; and do you think that that is worthy that God should take much notice of you, because you can cry when you are in danger of being damned; when at the same time you indeed care nothing for God's honor?

Seeing you thus disregard so great a God, is it a heinous thing for God to slight you, a little wretched, despicable creature; a worm, a mere nothing, and less than nothing; a vile insect, that has risen up in contempt against the Majesty of heaven and earth?

3. Why should God be looked upon as obliged to bestow salvation on you, when you have been so ungrateful for the mercies he has bestowed upon you already? God has tried you with a great deal of kindness, and he never has sincerely been thanked by you for any of it. God has watched over you and preserved you, and provided for you, and followed you with mercy all your days; and yet you have continued sinning against him. He has given you food and raiment, but you have improved both in the service of sin. He has preserved you while you slept; but when you arose, it was to return to the old trade of sinning. God, notwithstanding this ingratitude, has still continued his mercy; but his kindness has never won your heart, or brought you to a more grateful behavior towards him. It may be you have received many remarkable mercies, recoveries from sickness, or preservations of your life, when at one time and another exposed by accidents, when, if you had died, you would have gone directly to hell: but you never had any true thankfulness for any of these mercies. God has kept you out of hell, and continued your day of grace, and the offers of salvation, this so long a time; and that, it may be, while you did not regard your own salvation so much as to go in secret and ask God for it: and now God has greatly added to his mercy to you, by giving you the strivings of his Spirit, whereby you have a most precious opportunity for your salvation in your hands. But what thanks has God received for it? What kind of returns have you made for all this kindness? As God has multiplied mercies, so have you multiplied provocations.

And yet now are you ready to quarrel for mercy, and to find fault with God, not only that he does not bestow more mercy, but to contend with him, because he does not bestow infinite mercy upon you, heaven with all it contains, and even himself, for your eternal portion. What ideas have you of yourself, that you think God is obliged to do so much for you, though you treat him so ungratefully for his kindness that you have been followed with all the days of your life?

4. You have voluntarily chosen to be with Satan in his enmity and oppo-

sition to God; how justly therefore might you be with him in his punishment You did not choose to be on God's side, but rather chose to side with the devil, and have obstinately continued in it, against God's often repeated calls and counsels. You have chosen rather to hearken to Satan than to God, and would be with him in his work: you have given yourself up to him, to be subject to his power and government, in opposition to God. How justly therefore may God also give you up to him, and leave you in his power, to accomplish your ruin! Seeing you have yielded yourself to his will, to do as he would have you, surely God may leave you in his hands to execute his will upon you. If men will be with God's enemy, and on his side, why is God obliged to redeem them out of his hands, when they have done his work? Doubtless you would be glad to serve the devil, and be God's enemy while you live, and then to have God your friend, and to deliver you from the devil, when you come to die. But will God be unjust if he deals otherwise by you? No surely! It will be altogether and perfectly just, that you should have your portion with him with whom you have chosen your work; and that you should be in his possession to whose dominion you have yielded yourself; and if you cry to God for deliverance, he may most justly give you that answer, Judges x. 14, "Go to the gods which ye have chosen."

5. Consider how often you have refused to hear God's calls to you, and how just it would therefore be, if he should refuse to hear you when you call upon him. You are ready, it may be, to complain that you have often prayed, and earnestly begged of God to show you mercy, and yet have no answer of prayer: one says, I have been constant in prayer for so many years, and God has not heard me. Another says, I have done what I can; I have prayed as earnestly as I am able; I do not see how I can do more; and it will seem hard if after all I am denied. But do you consider how often God has called, and you have denied him? God has called earnestly and for a long time; he has called, and called again in his word, and in his providence, and you have refused. You was not uneasy for fear you should not show regard enough to his calls. You let him call as loud, and as long as he would; for your part, you had no leisure to attend to what he said; you had other business to mind; you had these and those lusts to gratify and please, and worldly lusts to attend; you could not afford to stand considering of what God had to say to you. When the ministers of Christ that he sent on that errand, have stood and pleaded with you, in his name, Sabbath after Sabbath, and have even spent their strength in it, how little was you moved by it! It did not alter you, but you went on still as you used to do; when you went away, you returned again to your sins, to your lasciviousness, to your vain mirth, to your covetousness, to your intemperance, and that has been the language of your heart and practice, Exod. v. 2, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" Was it no crime for you to refuse to hear when God called? And yet is it now very hard that God does not hear your earnest calls, and that though your calling on God be not from any respect to him, but merely from self-love? The devil would beg as earnestly as you, if he had any hope to get salvation by it, and a thousand times as earnestly and yet be as much of a devil as he is now. Are your calls more worthy to be heard than God's? Or is God more obliged to regard what you say to him, than you to regard his commands, counsels and invitations to you? What can have more justice in it than that in Prov. i. 24, &c., "Because I have called, and ye have refused, I stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh; when

your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me."

6. Have you not taken encouragement to sin against God, on that very presumption, that God would show you mercy when you sought it? And may not God justly refuse you that mercy that you have so presumed upon? That has been what you have flattered yourself with, and that which has made you bold to disobey God, viz., that though you did so, yet God would show you mercy when you cried earnestly to him for it. How righteous therefore would it be in God to disappoint such a wicked presumption! It was upon that very hope that you dared to affront the Majesty of heaven so dreadfully as you have done; and can you now be so sottish as to think that God is obliged not to frustrate that hope?

When a sinner takes encouragement to neglect that secret prayer that God has commanded, and to gratify his lusts, and to live a carnal and vain life, and thwart God, and run upon him, and contemn him to his face, thinking with himself, "If I do so, God would not damn me; he is a merciful God, and therefore when I seek his mercy he will bestow it upon me;" must God be accounted hard because he will not do according to such a sinner's presumption? Cannot he be excused from showing such a sinner mercy when he is pleased to seek it, without incurring the charge of being unjust? If this be the case, God has no liberty to vindicate his own honor and majesty; but must lay himself open to all manner of affronts, and yield himself up to the abuses of vile men, and let them disobey, despise and dishonor him, as much as they will; and when they have done, his mercy and pardoning grace must not be in his own power and at his own disposal, but he must be obliged to dispense it at their call: he must take these bold and vile contemners of his majesty, when it suits them to ask it, and must forgive all their sins, and not only so, but must adopt them into his family, and make them his children, and bestow eternal glory upon them. What mean, low and strange thoughts have such men of God, as think thus of him?

Consider that you have injured God the more, and have been the worse enemy to him, for his being a merciful God. So have you treated that attribute of God's mercy! How just is it therefore that you never should have any benefit of that attribute!

There is something peculiarly heinous in sinning against the mercy of God more than other attributes. There is such base and horrid ingratitude, in being the worse to God, because he is a being of infinite goodness and grace, that it above all things renders wickedness vile and detestable. This ought to win us, and engage us to serve God better; but instead of that, to sin against him the more, has something inexpressibly bad in it, and does in a peculiar manner enhance guilt, and incense wrath, as seems to be intimated in Rom. ii. 4, 5: "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

The greater the mercy of God is, the more should you be engaged to love him, and live to his glory. But it has been contrariwise with you; the consideration of the mercies of God being so exceeding great, is the thing wherewith you have encouraged yourself in sin. You have heard that the mercy of God was without bounds, that it was sufficient to pardon the greatest sinner, and you have upon that very account ventured to be a very great sinner Though it

was very offensive to God, though you heard that God infinitely hated sin, and that such practices as you went on in were exceeding contrary to his nature, will and glory, yet they did not make you uneasy; you heard that he was a very merciful God, and had grace enough to pardon you, and so cared not how offensive your sins were to him. How long have some of you gone on in sin, and what great sins have some of you been guilty of, on that presumption! Your own conscience can give testimony to it, that this has made you refuse God's calls, and has made you regardless of his repeated commands. Now, how righteous would it be if God should swear in his wrath, that you should never be the better for his being infinitely merciful!

Your ingratitude has been the greater, that you have not only abused the attribute of God's mercy, taking encouragement from it to continue in sin, but you have thus abused this mercy, under that very notion of its being exercised towards you, in a supposition that God would exercise infinite mercy to you in particular; which consideration should have especially endeared God to you. You have taken encouragement to sin the more, from that consideration, that Christ came into the world and died to save sinners. What thanks has Christ had from you, for enduring such a tormenting death for his enemies? Now, how justly might it be so, that God should refuse that you should ever be the better for his Son's laying down his life! It was because of these things that you put off seeking salvation: you would take the pleasure of sin still longer, hardening yourself with that, that mercy was infinite, and it would not be too late if you sought it afterwards. Now, how justly may God disappoint you in this, and order it so that it shall be too late!

7. How have some of you risen up against God, and in the frame of your minds opposed him in his sovereign dispensations! And how justly upon that account might God oppose you, and set himself against you! You never yet would submit to God; never could willingly comply with it, that God should have dominion over the world, and that he should govern it for his own glory, according to his own wisdom. You, a poor worm, a potsherd, a broken piece of an earthen vessel, have dared to find fault and quarrel with God. Isa. xlv. 9, "Wo to him that strives with his Maker. Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou?" But yet you have ventured to do it. Rom. ix. 20, "Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?" But yet you have thought you was big enough; you have taken upon you to call God to an account, why he does thus and thus; you have said to Jehovah, What dost thou?

If you have been restrained by fear from openly venting your opposition and enmity of heart against God's government, yet it has been in you: you have not been quiet in the frame of your mind; you had the heart of a viper within, and have been ready to spit venom at God; and it is well if sometimes you have not actually done it, by tolerating blasphemous thoughts and malignant risings of heart against him; yea, and the frame of your heart in some measure appeared in an impatient and fretful behavior.

Now, seeing you have thus opposed God, how just is it that God should oppose you! Or is it because you are so much better, and so much greater than God, that it is a crime for God to make that opposition against you that you do against him?* Do you think you ought to appropriate the liberty of making opposition to yourself as being your prerogative, so that you may be an

* The reader will not understand from this manner of speaking, that Mr. Edwards would be understood to say, that God has at any time, or in any view, the same moral feelings towards the sinner, that the sinner has towards him.

enemy to God, but God must by no means be an enemy to you, but must be looked upon under obligation nevertheless to help you, and save you by his blood, and bestow his best blessings upon you?

Consider how in the frame of your mind you have thwarted God in those very exercises of mercy towards others that you are seeking for yourself. God's exercising his infinite grace towards your neighbors, has put you into an ill frame, and it may be, set you into a mere tumult of mind: how justly therefore may God refuse ever to exercise that mercy towards you! Have you not thus opposed God's showing mercy to others, even at the very time when you pretended to be earnest with God for pity and help for yourself? Yea, and while you was endeavoring to get something wherewith to recommend yourself to God! And will you look to God still with a challenge of mercy, and contend with him for it notwithstanding? Can you, who have such a heart, and have thus behaved yourself, come to God for any other than mere sovereign mercy?

II. If you should be forever cast off by God, it would be agreeable to your treatment of Jesus Christ. It would have been just with God if he had cast you off forever, without ever making you the offer of a Saviour. But God hath not done that, but has provided a Saviour for sinners, and offered him to you, even his own Son Jesus Christ, who is the only Saviour of men: all that be not forever cast off are saved by him: God offers men salvation through him, and has promised us, that if we come to him, we shall not be cast off. But you have treated, and still treat this Saviour after such a manner, that if you should be eternally cast off by God, it would be most agreeable to your behavior towards him; which appears by this, viz.

That you reject Christ, and will not have him for your Saviour.

If God offers you a Saviour from deserved punishment, and you will not receive him, then surely it is just that you should go without a Saviour. Or is God obliged, because you do not like this Saviour, to provide you another? If, when he has given an infinitely honorable and glorious person, even his only begotten Son, to be a sacrifice for sin, in the fire of his wrath, and so provided salvation, and this Saviour is offered to you, you be not suited in him, and refuse to accept him, is God therefore unjust if he does not save you? Is he obliged to save you in a way of your own choosing, because you do not like the way of his choosing? Or will you charge Christ with injustice because he does not become your Saviour, when at the same time you will not have him when he offers himself to you, and beseeches you to accept of him as a Saviour?

I am sensible that by this time many persons are ready to open their mouths in objection against this. If all should speak what they now think, we should hear murmuring all over the meeting-house, and one and another would say, "I cannot see how this can be, that I be not willing that Christ should be my Saviour, when I would give all the world that he was my Saviour. How is it possible that I should not be willing to have Christ for my Saviour, when this is what I am seeking after, and praying for, and striving for, as for my life?"

Here therefore I would endeavor to convince you, that you are under a gross mistake in this matter. And, 1st, I would endeavor to show the weakness of the grounds of your mistake. And 2dly, to demonstrate to you, that you have rejected, and do wilfully reject Jesus Christ.

1. That you may see the weakness of the grounds of your mistake, consider,

1st. There is a great deal of difference between a willingness not to be damned, and a being willing to receive Christ for your Saviour. You have the former; there is no doubt to be made of that: nobody supposes that you love misery so well as to choose an eternity of it; and so doubtless you are willing

to be saved from eternal misery. But that is a very different thing from being willing to come to Christ: persons very commonly mistake the one for the other, but they are quite two things. You may love the deliverance, but hate the deliverer. You tell of a willingness; but consider what is the object of that willingness: it does not respect Christ; the way of salvation by him is not at all the object of it; but it is wholly terminated on your escape from misery. The inclination of your will goes no further than self, it never reaches Christ. You are willing not to be miserable; that is, you love yourself, and there your will and choice terminate. And it is but a vain pretence and delusion to say or think, that you are willing to accept of Christ.

2d. There is certainly a great deal of difference between a forced compliance and a free willingness. Force and freedom cannot consist together. Now that willingness that you tell of, whereby you think you are willing to have Christ for a Saviour, is merely a forced thing. Your heart does not go out after Christ, of itself, but you are forced and driven to seek an interest in him. Christ has no share at all in your heart; there is no manner of closing of the heart with him. This forced compliance is not what Christ seeks of you; he seeks a free and willing acceptance: Psalm cx. 3, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." He seeks not that you should receive him against your will, but with a free will. He seeks entertainment in your heart and choice.—And,

If you refuse thus to receive Christ, how just is it that Christ should refuse to receive you! How reasonable are Christ's terms, who offers to save all those that willingly, or with a good will, accept of him for their Saviour! Who can rationally expect that Christ should force himself upon any man to be his Saviour? Or what can be looked for more reasonable, than that all that would be saved by Christ, should heartily and freely entertain him? And surely it would be very dishonorable for Christ to offer himself upon lower terms.

But I would now proceed,

2. To show that it is really so, that you are not willing to have Christ for a Saviour. To convince you of it, consider,

1st. How impossible it is that you should be willing to accept of Christ as a Saviour from the desert of a punishment that you are not sensible you have deserved. If you are truly willing to accept of Christ as a Saviour, it must be as a sacrifice to make atonement for your guilt: Christ came into the world on this errand, to offer himself as an atonement, to answer for our desert of punishment. But how is it possible that you should be willing to accept of Christ as an atonement for that guilt that you be not sensible that you have? How can you be willing to have Christ for a Saviour from a desert of hell if you be not sensible that you have a desert of hell? If you have not really deserved everlasting burnings in hell, then the very offer of an atonement for such a desert is an imposition upon you. If you have no such guilt upon you, then the very offer of a satisfaction for that guilt is an injury, because it implies in it a charge of guilt that you are free from. Now, therefore, it is impossible that a man that is not convinced of his guilt can be willing to accept of an offer; because he cannot be willing to accept the charge that the offer implies: that he looks upon as injurious. A man that is not convinced that he has deserved so dreadful a punishment, cannot willingly submit to be charged with it; if he think he is willing, it is but a mere forced, feigned business; because in his heart he looks upon himself greatly injured; and therefore he cannot freely accept of Christ, under that notion of a Saviour from that guilt, and from the desert of such a punishment; for such an acceptance is an implicit owning that he does deserve such a punishment

I do not say, but that men may be willing to be saved from an undeserved punishment; they may rather not suffer it than suffer it: but a man cannot be willing to accept one at God's hands, under the notion of a Saviour from a punishment deserved from him that he thinks he has not deserved; it is impossible that any one should freely allow a Saviour under that notion. Such a one cannot like the way of salvation by Christ; for if he thinks he has not deserved hell, then he will think that freedom from hell is a debt; and therefore cannot willingly and heartily receive it as a free gift. If a king should condemn a man to some exceeding tormenting death, which the condemned person thought himself not deserving of, but looked upon the sentence unjust and cruel, and the king, when the time of execution drew nigh, should offer him his pardon, under the notion of a very great act of grace and clemency, the condemned person never could willingly and heartily allow it under that notion, because he judged himself unjustly condemned.

Now by this it is evident that you are not willing to accept of Christ as your Saviour; because you never yet had such a sense of your own sinfulness, and such a conviction of your great guilt in God's sight, as to be indeed convinced that you lay justly condemned to the punishment of hell. You never was convinced that you had forfeited all favor, and was in God's hands, and at his sovereign and arbitrary disposal, to be either destroyed or saved, just as he pleased. You never yet was convinced of the sovereignty of God. Hence are there so many objections arising against the justice of your punishment from original sin, and from God's decrees, from mercy shown to others, and the like.

2d. That you be not sincerely willing to accept of Christ as your Saviour, appears by this, that you never have been convinced that he is sufficient for the work of your salvation. You never had a sight or sense of any such excellency or worthiness in Christ, as should give such great value to his blood and his mediation with God, as that it was sufficient to be accepted for such exceeding guilty creatures, and those that have so provoked God, and exposed themselves to such amazing wrath. A saying it is so, and a customary yielding and allowing it to be as others say, is a very different thing from being really convinced of it, and a being made sensible of it in your own heart. The sufficiency of Christ depends upon, or rather consists in his excellency. It is because he is so excellent a person that his blood is of sufficient value to atone for sin, and it is hence that his obedience is so worthy in God's sight; it is also hence that his intercession is so prevalent; and therefore those that never had any spiritual sight or sense of Christ's excellency, cannot be sensible of his sufficiency.

And that sinners be not convinced that Christ is sufficient for the work he has undertaken, appears most manifestly when they are under great convictions of their sin, and danger of God's wrath. Though it may be before they thought they could allow Christ to be sufficient (for it is easy to allow any one to be sufficient for our defence at a time when we see no danger), yet when they come to be sensible of their guilt and God's wrath, what discouraging thoughts do they entertain! How are they ready to draw towards despair, as if there were no hope or help for such wicked creatures as they! The reason is, they have no apprehension or sense of any other way that God's majesty can be vindicated, but only in their misery. To tell them of the blood of Christ signifies nothing, it does not relieve their sinking, despairing hearts. This makes it most evident that they are not convinced that Christ is sufficient to be their Mediator.

And as long as they are unconvinced of this, it is impossible that they should be willing to accept of him as their Mediator and Saviour. A man in distress-

ing fear will not willingly betake himself to a fort that he judges not sufficient to defend him from the enemy. A man will not willingly venture out into the ocean in a ship that he suspects is leaky, and will sink before he gets through his voyage.

3d. It is evident that you are not willing to have Christ for your Saviour, because you have so mean an opinion of him, that you durst not trust his faithfulness. One that undertakes to be the Saviour of souls had need be faithful; for if he fails in such a trust, how great is the loss! But you are not convinced of Christ's faithfulness; as is evident, because at such times as when you are in a considerable measure sensible of your guilt and God's anger, you cannot be convinced that Christ is willing to accept of you, or that he stands ready to receive you if you should come to him, though Christ so much invites you to come to him, and has so fully declared that he will not reject you, if you do come; as particularly, John vi. 37, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." Now, there is no man can be heartily willing to trust his eternal welfare in the hands of an unfaithful person, or one whose faithfulness he suspects.

4th. You are not willing to be saved in that way by Christ, as is evident, because you are not willing that your own goodness should be set at nought. In the way of salvation by Christ, men's own goodness is wholly set at nought; there is no account at all made of it. Now you cannot be willing to be saved in a way wherein your own goodness is set at nought, as is evident by that, that you make much of it yourself. You make much of your prayers and pains in religion, and are often thinking of them; how considerable do they appear to you, when you look back upon them! And how much are some of you in thinking how much more you have done than some others, and in expecting some respect or regard that God should manifest to what you do! Now, if you make so much of what you do yourself, it is impossible that you should be freely willing that God should make nothing of it. As we may see in other things; if a man is proud of a great estate, or if he values himself much upon his honorable office, or his great abilities, it is impossible that he should like it, and heartily approve of it, that others should make light of these things and despise them.

Seeing therefore that it is so evident that you refuse to accept of Christ as your Saviour, why is Christ to be blamed that he does not save you? Christ has offered himself to you to be your Saviour in time past, and he continues offering himself still, and you continue to reject him, and yet complain that he does not save you.—So strangely unreasonable, and inconsistent with themselves, are gospel sinners!

But I expect that there are many of you that in your hearts still object; your mouths be not stopped.—Such an objection as this, is probably now in the hearts of many here present.

Object. If it be so, that I am not willing to have Christ for my Saviour, yet I cannot make myself willing.

But I would give an answer to this objection by laying down two things, that must be acknowledged to be exceeding evident.

1. It is no excuse, that you cannot receive Christ of yourself, unless you would if you could. This is so evident of itself, that it scarce needs any proof Certainly if persons would not if they could, it is just the same thing as to the blame that lies upon them, whether they can or cannot. If you were willing, and then found that you could not, your being unable would alter the case, and might be some excuse; because then the defect would not be in your will, but

only in your ability: but as long as you will not, it is no matter what the ability is, whether you have ability or no ability.

If you be not willing to accept of Christ, it will follow that you have no sincere willingness to be willing; because the will always necessarily approves of, and rests in its own acts. To suppose the contrary would be to suppose a contradiction; it would be to suppose that a man's will is contrary to itself, or that he wills contrary to what he himself wills. So that as you are not willing to come to Christ, and can ot make yourself willing, so you have no sincere desire to be willing; and therefore may most justly perish without a Saviour. There is no excuse at all for you; for say what you will about your inability, the seat of your blame lies in your perverse will, that is an enemy to the Saviour. It is in vain for you to tell of your want of power, as long as your will is found defective. If a man should hate you, and devour you, and exalt himself and smite you in the face, and tell you that he did it voluntarily, and because he had a mind to, but only should tell you at the same time, that he hated you so much, that he could not help choosing and willing so to do, would you take it the more patiently for that? Would not your indignation be rather stirred up the more?

2. If you would be willing if you could, that is no excuse, unless your unwillingness to be willing be sincere. That which is hypocritical, and does not come from the heart, but is merely forced, ought wholly to be set aside, as worthy of no consideration; and that because common sense teaches, that that which is not hearty but hypocritical is indeed nothing, being only a show of what is not; but that which is good for nothing, ought to go for nothing. But if you set aside all that is not free, and call nothing a willingness, but a free hearty willingness, then see how the case stands, and whether or no you have not lost all your excuse for standing out against the calls of the gospel. You say you would make yourself willing to accept if you could; but it is not from any good principle that you are willing for that; it is not from any free inclination or true respect to Christ, or any love to your duty, or any spirit of obedience, or from the influence of any manner of real respect, or tendency in your heart, towards any thing that is good, or from any other principle than such as is in the hearts of devils, and would make them have the same sort of willingness in the same circumstances. It is therefore evident, that there can be no goodness in that woulding to be willing to come to Christ: and that which has no goodness cannot be an excuse for any badness. If there be no good in it, then it signifies nothing, and weighs nothing, when put into the scales to counterbalance that which is bad.

Sinners therefore spend their time in foolish arguing and objecting, making much of that which is good for nothing, making those excuses that be not worth offering. It is in vain to keep making objections: you stand justly condemned: the blame lies all at your door: thrust it off from you as often as you will, it will return upon you: sew fig leaves as you will, your nakedness will appear: you continue wilfully and wickedly rejecting Jesus Christ, and will not have him for your Saviour, and therefore it is sottish madness in you to charge Christ with injustice that he does not save you.

Here is the sin of unbelief! Thus the guilt of that great sin lies upon you! If you never had thus treated a Saviour, you might most justly have been damned to all eternity: it would but be exactly agreeable to your treatment of God. But besides this, when God, notwithstanding, has offered you his own dear Son, to save you from this endless misery you had deserved, and not only so, but to make you happy eternally in the enjoyment of himself, you refused him, and

would not have him for your Saviour, and still refuse to comply with the offers of the gospel; what can render any person more inexcusable? If you should now perish forever, what can you have to say?

Hereby the justice of God in your destruction appears in two respects.

1. It is more abundantly manifest that it is just that you should be destroyed. Justice never appears so conspicuous as it does after refused and abused mercy. Justice in damnation appears abundantly the more clear and bright, after a wilful rejection of offered salvation. What can an offended prince do more than freely offer pardon to a condemned malefactor? And if he refuses to accept of it, will any one say that his execution is unjust?

2. God's justice will appear in your greater destruction. Besides the guilt that you would have had if a Saviour never had been offered, you bring that great additional guilt upon you, of most ungratefully refusing offered deliverance. What more base and vile treatment of God can there be, than for you, when justly condemned to eternal misery, and ready to be executed, and God graciously sends his own Son, who comes and knocks at your door with a pardon in his hand, and not only a pardon, but a deed of eternal glory; I say, what can be worse, than for you, out of dislike and enmity against God and his Son, to refuse to accept those benefits at his hands? How justly may the anger of God be greatly incensed and increased by it! When a sinner thus ungratefully rejects mercy, his last error is worse than the first; this is more heinous than all his former rebellion, and may justly bring down more fearful wrath upon him.

The heinousness of this sin of rejecting a Saviour especially appears in two things.

1. The greatness of the benefits offered; which appears in the greatness of the deliverance, which is from inexpressible degrees of corruption and wickedness of heart and life, the least degree of which is infinitely evil; and from misery that is everlasting; and in the greatness and glory of the inheritance purchased and offered, Heb. ii. 3: "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"

2. The wonderfulness of the way in which these benefits are procured and offered. That God should lay help on his own Son, when our case was so deplorable that help could be had in no mere creature; and that he should undertake for us, and should come into the world, and take upon him our nature, and should not only appear in a low state of life, but should die such a death, and endure such torments and contempt for sinners while enemies, how wonderful is it! And what tongue or pen can set forth the greatness of the ingratitude, baseness and perverseness that there is in it, when a perishing sinner that is in the most extreme necessity of salvation, rejects it, after it is procured in such a way as this! That so glorious a person should be thus treated, and that when he comes on so gracious an errand! That he should stand so long offering himself, and calling, and inviting, as he has done to many of you, and all to no purpose, but all the while be set at nought! Surely you might justly be cast into hell without one more offer of a Saviour! Yea, and thrust down into the lowest hell! Herein you have exceeded the very devils; for they never rejected the offers of such glorious mercy; no, nor of any mercy at all. This will be the distinguishing condemnation of gospel sinners: John iii. 18, "He that believeth not, is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

That outward smoothness of your carriage towards Christ, that appearance of respect to him in your looks, your speeches and gestures, do not argue but

that you set him at nought in your heart. There may be much of these outward shows of respect, and yet you be like Judas, that betrayed the Son of man with a kiss; and like those mockers that bowed the knee before him, and at the same time spit in his face.

III. If God should forever cast you off and destroy you, it would be agreeable to your treatment of others; it would be no other than what would be exactly answerable to your behavior towards your fellow creatures, that have the same human nature, and are naturally in the same circumstances with you, and that you ought to love as yourself. And that appears especially in two things.

1. You have many of you been opposite in your spirit to the salvation of others. There are several ways that natural men manifest a spirit of opposition against the salvation of other souls. It sometimes appears by a fear that their companions, acquaintance, and equals, will obtain mercy, and so become unspeakably happier than they. It is sometimes manifested by an uneasiness at the news of others having hopefully obtained. It appears when persons envy others for it, and dislike them the more, and disrelish their talk, and avoid their company, and cannot bear to hear their religious discourse, and especially to receive warnings and counsels from them. And it oftentimes appears by their backwardness to entertain charitable thoughts of them, and their being difficultly brought to believe that it is really so, that they have obtained mercy, and a forwardness to listen to any thing that seems to contradict it. The devil hated to own Job's sincerity, Job i. 7, &c., and chap. ii. verses 3, 4, 5. There appears very often much of this spirit of the devil in natural men. Sometimes they are ready to make a ridicule of others' pretended godliness: they speak of the ground of others' hopes, as the enemies of the Jews did of the wall that they built: Neh. iv. 3, "Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, That which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall." There are many that join with Sanballat and Tobiah, and are of the same spirit with them. There always was, and always will be, an enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. It appeared in Cain, who hated his brother, because he was more acceptable to God than himself; and it appears still in these times, and in this place. There are many that are like the elder brother, who could not bear it that the prodigal, when he returned, should be received with such joy and good entertainment, and was put into a fret by it both against his brother that had returned, and his father that made him so welcome, Luke xv.

Thus have many of you been opposite to the salvation of others, that stand in as great necessity of it as you. You have been against their being delivered from everlasting misery, that can bear it no better than you; not because their salvation would do you any hurt, or their damnation help you, any otherwise than as it would gratify that vile spirit that is so much like the spirit of the devil, who, because he is miserable himself, is unwilling that others should be happy. How just therefore is it that God should be opposite to your salvation?

If you have so little love or mercy in you as to begrudge your neighbor's salvation, whom you have no cause to hate, but the law of God and nature requires you to love; why is God bound to exercise such infinite love and mercy to you, as to save you at the price of his own blood, that he is no way bound to love, but that have deserved his hatred a thousand and a thousand times? You are not willing that others should be converted, that have behaved themselves injuriously towards you; and yet, will you count it hard if God does not

bestow converting grace upon you that have deserved ten thousand times as ill of God, as any of your neighbors have of you? You are opposite to God's showing mercy to these, and those that you think have been vicious persons, and are very unworthy of such mercy. Is others' unworthiness a just reason why God should not bestow mercy on them? And yet will God be hard, if, notwithstanding all your unworthiness, and the abominableness of your spirit and practice in his sight, he does not show you mercy? You would have God bestow liberally on you, and upbraid not; but yet, when he shows mercy to others, you are ready to upbraid as soon as you hear of it; you immediately are thinking with yourself how ill they have behaved themselves; and it may be your mouths on this occasion are open, enumerating and aggravating the sins they have been guilty of. You would have God bury all your faults, and wholly blot out all your transgressions; but yet if he bestows mercy on others, it may be you will take that occasion to rake up all their old faults that you can think of. You do not much reflect on and condemn yourself for your baseness and unjust spirit towards others, in your opposition to their salvation; you do not quarrel with yourself, and condemn yourself for this; but yet you, to your heart, will quarrel with God, and condemn him, and fret at his dispensations, because you think he seems opposite to showing mercy to you. One would think that the consideration of these things should forever stop your mouth.

2. Consider how you have promoted others' damnation. Many of you, by the bad examples you have set, by corrupting the minds of others, by your sinful conversation, by leading them into sin, or strengthening them in sin, and by the mischief that you have done in human society other ways, that might be mentioned, have been guilty of those things that have tended to others' damnation. You have heretofore appeared on the side of sin and Satan, and have behaved yourself so as much to strengthen their interest, and have been many ways accessory to others' sins, have hardened others' hearts, and thereby have done what has tended to the ruin of their souls.

And without doubt there are those here present that have been in a great measure the means of others' damnation. Though it is true that it is determined of God whom he will save, and whom not, from all eternity, yet one man may really be a means of others' damnation as well as salvation. Christ charges the Scribes and Pharisees with with this, Matt. xxiii. 13: "Ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering, to go in." We have no reason to think that this congregation has none in it that are cursed from day to day by poor souls that are roaring out in hell, whose damnation they have been a means of, or have greatly contributed to.

There are many that contribute to their own children's damnation, by neglecting their education, and setting them bad examples, and bringing them up in sinful ways: they take some care of their bodies, but take but little care of their poor souls; they provide for them bread to eat, but deny them the bread of life, that their famishing souls stand in need of. And are there no such parents here that have thus treated their children? If their children be not gone to hell, it is not because they have not done what has tended to their destruction. Seeing therefore you have had no more regard to others' salvation, and have promoted their damnation, how justly might God leave you to perish yourself!

IV. If God should eternally cast you off, it would but be agreeable to your own behavior towards yourself: and that in two respects:

1. In being so careless of your own salvation. You have refused to take

care for your salvation, as God has counselled and commanded you from time to time; and why may not God neglect it, now you seek it of him? Is God obliged to be more careful of your happiness, than you are, either of your own happiness or his glory? Is God bound to take that care for you, out of love to you, that you will not take for yourself, either from love to yourself, or regard to his authority? How long, and how greatly, have you neglected the welfare of your precious soul, refusing to take pains and deny yourself, or put yourself a little out of your way for your salvation, while God has been calling upon you! Neither your duty to God, nor love to your own soul, were enough to induce you to do little things for your own eternal welfare; and yet do you now expect that God should do great things, putting forth almighty power, and exercising infinite mercy for it? You was urged to take care for your salvation, and not to put it off: you was told that that was the best time, before you grew older, and that it might be, if you would put it off, God would not hear you afterwards; but yet you would not hearken; you would run the venture of it. Now how justly might God order it so, that it should be too late, leaving you to seek in vain! You was told, that you would repent of it if you delayed; but you would not hear: how justly therefore may God give you cause to repent of it, by refusing to show you mercy now! If God sees you going on in ways contrary to his commands and his glory, and requires you to forsake them, and tells you that they are ways that tend to the destruction of your own soul, and therefore counsels you to avoid them, and you refuse; how just would it be if God should be provoked by it, henceforward to be as careless of the good of your souls as you are yourself!

2. You have not only neglected your salvation, but you have wilfully taken direct courses to undo yourself. You have gone on in those ways and practices that have directly tended to your damnation, and have been perverse and obstinate in it. You cannot plead ignorance; you had all the light set before you that you could desire: God told you that you was undoing yourself; but yet you would do it: he told you that the path you was going in led to destruction, and counselled you to avoid it; but you would not hearken: how justly therefore may God leave you to be undone! You have obstinately persisted to travel in the way that leads to hell for a long time, contrary to God's continual counsels and commands, till it may be at length you are almost to your journey's end, and are come near to hell's gate, and so begin to be sensible of your danger and misery; and now account it unjust and hard if God will not deliver you! You have destroyed yourself, and destroyed yourself wilfully, contrary to God's repeated counsels, yea, and destroyed yourself in fighting against God: now therefore, why do you blame any but yourself if you are destroyed? If you will undo yourself in opposing God, and while God opposes you by his calls and counsels, and, it may be too, by the convictions of his Spirit, what can you object against it, if God now leaves you to be undone? You would have your own way, and did not like that God should oppose you in it, and your way was to ruin your own soul: how just therefore is it if now, at length, God ceases to oppose you, and falls in with you, and lets your soul be ruined; and as you would destroy yourself, so should put to his hand to destroy you too! The ways you went on in, had a natural tendency to your misery: if you would drink poison in opposition to God, and in contempt of him and his advice, whom can you blame but yourself if you are poisoned, and so perish? If you would run into the fire against all restraints both of God's mercy and authority, you must even blame yourself if you are burnt.

Thus I have proposed some things to your consideration, which, if you are

not exceeding blind, senseless, and perverse, will stop your mouth, and convince you that you stand justly condemned before God, and that he would in no wise deal hardly with you, but altogether justly, in denying you any mercy, and in refusing to hear your prayers, let you pray never so earnestly, and never so often, and continue in it never so long; and that God may utterly disregard your tears and moans, your heavy heart, your earnest desires, and great endeavors; and that he may cast you into eternal destruction, without any regard to your welfare, denying you converting grace, and giving you over to Satan, and at last cast you into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, to be there to eternity, having no rest day nor night, forever glorifying his justice upon you, in the presence of the holy angels and the presence of the Lamb.

Object. But here many may still object (for I am sensible it is a hard thing to stop sinners' mouths), "God shows mercy to others that have done these things as well as I, yea, that have done a great deal worse than I."

Ans. 1. That does not prove that God is any way bound to show mercy to you, or them either. If God does bestow it on others, he does not bestow it on them because he is bound to bestow it: he might if he had pleased, with glorious justice, have denied it them. If God bestows it on some, that does not prove that he is bound to bestow it on any; and if he is bound to bestow it on none, then he is not bound to bestow it on you. God is in debt to none; and if he gives to some that he is not in debt to, because it is his pleasure, that does not bring him into debt to others. It alters not the case as to you at all, whether others have it or have it not: you do not deserve damnation the less, than if mercy never had been bestowed on any at all. Matt. xx. 15, "Is thine eye evil, because I am good?"

2. If this objection be good, then the exercise of God's mercy is not in his own right, and his grace is not his own to give. That which God may not dispose of as he pleases, is not his own; for that which is one's own, is at his own disposal; but if it be not God's own, then he is not capable of making a gift or present of it to any one; it is impossible to give a debt.

What is it that you would make of God? Must the great God be tied up to that, that he must not use his own pleasure in bestowing his own gifts, but if he bestows them on one, must be looked upon obliged to bestow them on another? Is not God worthy to have the same right, with respect to the gifts of his grace, that a man has to his money or goods? Is it because God is not so great, and should be more in subjection than man, that this cannot be allowed him? If any of you see cause to show kindness to a neighbor, do all the rest of your neighbors come to you, and tell you, that you owe them so much as you have given to such a man? But this is the way that you deal with God, as though God were not worthy to have as absolute a property in his goods, as you have in yours.

At this rate God cannot make a present of any thing; he has nothing of his own to bestow: if he has a mind to show peculiar favor to some, or to lay some particular persons under peculiar obligations to him, he cannot do it; because he has no special gift, that his creatures stand in great need of, and that would tend greatly to their happiness, at his own disposal. If this be the case, why do you pray to God to bestow saving grace upon you? If God does not fairly deny it to you, because he bestows it on others, then it is not worth your while to pray for it, but you may go and tell him that he has bestowed it on these and those, as bad or worse than you, and so demand it of him as a debt. And at this rate persons never need to thank God for salvation, when it is bestowed; for what occasion is there to thank God for that which was not at his own disposal,

and that he could not fairly have denied. The thing at bottom is, that men have low thoughts of God, and high thoughts of themselves; and therefore it is that they look upon God as having so little right, and they so much. Matt. xx 15, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?"

3. God may justly show greater respect to others than to you, for you have shown greater respect to others than to God. You have shown greater respect to men than to God. You have rather chosen to offend God than offend men. God only shows a greater respect to others, that are by nature your equals, than to you; but you have shown a greater respect to those that are infinitely inferior to God than to him. You have shown a greater regard to wicked men than to God; you have honored them more, loved them better, and adhered to them rather than to him. Yea, you have honored the devil, in many respects, more than God: you have chosen his will and his interest, rather than God's will, and his glory: you have chosen a little worldly pelf, rather than God: you have set more by a vile lust than by him: you have chosen these things, and rejected God: you have set your hearts on these things, and cast God behind your back: and where is the injustice if God is pleased to show greater respect to others than to you, or if he chooses others and rejects you? You have shown great respect to vile and worthless things, and no respect to God's glory; and why may not God set his love on others, and have no respect to your happiness? You have shown great respect to others and not to God, that you are laid under infinite obligations to respect above all; and why may not God show respect to others, and not to you, that never have laid him under the least obligation?

And will you not be ashamed, notwithstanding all these things, still to open your mouth, to object and cavil about the decrees of God, and other things that you cannot fully understand? Let the decrees of God be what they will, that alters not the case as to your liberty, any more than if God had only foreknown. And why is God to blame for decreeing things? How unbecoming an infinitely wise Being would it have been to have made a world, and let things run at random, without disposing events, or foreordering how they should come to pass? And what is that to you, how God has foreordered things, as long as your constant experience teaches you, that that does not hinder your liberty, or your doing what you choose to do? This you know, and your daily practice and behavior amongst men declares that you are fully sensible of it, with respect to yourself and others: and still to object, because there are some things in God's dispensations above your understanding, is exceeding unreasonable. Your own conscience charges you with great guilt, and with those things that have been mentioned, let the secret things of God be what they will. Your conscience charges you with those vile dispositions, and that base behavior towards God, that you would at any time most highly resent in your neighbor towards you, and that not a whit the less for any concern those secret counsels and mysterious dispensations of God may have in the matter. It is in vain for you to exalt yourself against an infinitely great, and holy, and just God. If you continue in it, it will be to your eternal shame and confusion, when hereafter you shall see at whose door all the blame of your misery lies.

I will finish what I have to say to natural men in the application of this doctrine with a caution not to improve the doctrine to discouragement. For though it would be righteous in God forever to cast you off, and destroy you, yet it will also be just in God to save you, in and through Christ, who has made complete satisfaction for all sin. Rom. iii. 25, 26, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare,

I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Yea, God may, through this Mediator, not only justly, but honorably show you mercy. The blood of Christ is so precious, that it is fully sufficient to pay that debt that you have contracted, and perfectly to vindicate the divine Majesty from all that dishonor that has been cast upon it, by those many great sins of yours, that have been mentioned. It was as great, and indeed a much greater thing, for Christ to die, than it would have been for you and all mankind to have burnt in hell to all eternity. Of such dignity and excellency is Christ in the eyes of God, that, seeing he has suffered so much for poor sinners, God is willing to be at peace with them, however vile and unworthy they have been, and on how many accounts soever the punishment would be just. So that you need not be at all discouraged from seeking mercy, for there is enough in Christ.

Indeed it would not become the glory of God's majesty to show mercy to you that have been so sinful and vile a creature, for any thing that you have done, for such worthless and despicable things as your prayers, and other religious performances; it would be very dishonorable and unworthy of God so to do, and it is in vain to expect it: he will show mercy only on Christ's account, and that, according to his sovereign pleasure, on whom he pleases, when he pleases, and in what manner he pleases. You cannot bring him under the obligation by your works; do what you will, he will not look on himself obliged. But if it be his pleasure, he can honorably show mercy through Christ to any sinner of you all, not one in this congregation excepted.

Therefore here is encouragement for you still to seek and wait, notwithstanding all your wickedness; agreeably to Samuel's speech to the children of Israel, when they were terrified with the thunder and rain that God sent, and their guilt stared them in the face: 1 Sam. xii. 20, "Fear not; ye have done all this wickedness; yet turn not aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your hearts."

I would conclude this discourse by improving the doctrine, in the second place, very briefly to put the godly in mind of the wonderfulness of the grace of God towards them. For such were some of you.—The case was just so with you as you have heard; you had such a wicked heart, you lived such a wicked life, and it would have been most just with God forever to have cast you off: but he has had mercy upon you; he hath made his glorious grace appear in your everlasting salvation. You have behaved yourself so as you have heard towards God: you had no love to God; but yet he has exercised unspeakable love to you: you have contemned God, and set light by him; but so great a value has God's grace set on you and your happiness, that you have been redeemed at the price of the blood of his own Son: you chose to be with Satan in his service; but yet God hath made you a joint heir with Christ of his glory. You was ungrateful for past mercies; but yet God not only continued those mercies, but bestowed unspeakably greater mercies upon you: you refused to hear when God called; but yet God heard you when you called: you abused the infiniteness of God's mercy to encourage yourself in sin against God; but yet God has manifested the infiniteness of that mercy, in the exercises of it towards you: you have rejected Christ, and set him at nought; and yet he is become your Saviour: you have neglected your own salvation; but God has not neglected it: you have destroyed yourself; but yet in God has been your help God has magnified his free grace towards you, and not to others; because he has chosen you, and it hath pleased him to set his love upon you.

O! what cause is here for praise. What obligations are upon you to bless

the Lord, who hath dealt bountifully with you, and to magnify his holy name! What cause to praise him in humility, to walk humbly before God; and to be conformed to that in Ezek. xvi. 63, "That thou mayest remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God!" You should never open your mouth in boasting, or self-justification: you should lie the lower before God for his mercy to you. But you have reason, the more abundantly for your past sins, to open your mouth in God's praises, that they may be continually in your mouth, both here and to all eternity, for his rich, unspeakable, and sovereign mercy to you, whereby he, and he alone, hath made you to differ from others.

SERMON X

THE FUTURE PUNISHMENT OF THE WICKED UNAVOIDABLE AND INTOLERABLE.

EZEKIEL xxii. 14.—Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong in the days that I shall deal with thee? I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it.

IN the former part of this chapter, we have a dreadful catalogue of the sins of Jerusalem; as you may see from the first to the thirteenth verse. In the thirteenth, which is the verse preceding the text, God manifests his great displeasure and fearful wrath against them for those their iniquities: "Behold, I have smitten mine hand at thy dishonest gain which thou hast made, and at thy blood which hath been in the midst of thee." The expression of God's smiting his hand, signifies the greatness of his anger, and his preparing himself, as it were, to execute wrath answerable to their heinous crimes. It is an allusion to what we sometimes see in men when they are surprised, by seeing or hearing of some horrid offence, or most intolerable injury, which very much stirs their spirits, and animates them with high resentment; on such an occasion they will rise up in wrath and smite their hands together, as an expression of the heat of their indignation, and full resolution to be avenged on those who have committed the injury, as in chap. xxi. 17: "I will also smite mine hands together, and I will cause my fury to rest; I the Lord have said it."

Then, in the text, the punishment of that people is represented.

1. The nature of their punishment is more generally represented in that therein God will undertake to *deal* with them: God here threatens to deal with the sinners in Jerusalem. The prophets could do nothing with them. God had sent them one after another; but those sinners were too strong for them, and beat one, and killed another. Therefore now God himself undertakes to deal with them.

2. Their punishment is more particularly represented in three things, viz, the intolerableness, the remedilessness, and the unavoidableness of it.

(1.) The intolerableness of it: *Can thine heart endure?*

(2.) The remedilessness, or the impossibility of their doing any thing for their own relief: *Can thine hands be strong?*

(3.) The unavoidableness of it: *I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it.*

DOCTRINE.

Since God hath undertaken to deal with impenitent sinners, they shall neither shun the threatened misery, nor deliver themselves out of it, nor can they bear it.

In handling this doctrine, I shall, 1. Show what is implied in God's undertaking to deal with impenitent sinners. 2. That therefore they cannot avoid punishment. 3. That they cannot in any measure deliver themselves from it, or do any thing for their own relief under it. 4. That they cannot bear it. 5. I shall answer an inquiry; and then proceed to the use.

I. I shall show what is implied in God's undertaking to deal with impenitent sinners.—Others are not able to deal with them. They baffle all the means used with them by those that are appointed to teach and to rule over them. They will not yield to parents, or to the counsels, warnings, or reproofs of minis-

ters: they prove obstinate and stiff-hearted. Therefore God undertakes to deal with them.—This implies the following things:

1. That God will reckon with them, and take of them satisfaction to his justice. In this world God puts forth his authority to command them; and to require subjection to him. In his commands he is very positive, strictly requiring of them the performance of such and such duties, and as positively forbidding such and such things which were contrary to their duty. But they have no regard to these commands. God continues commanding, and they continue rebelling. They make nothing of God's authority. God threatens, but they despise his threatening.—They make nothing of dishonoring God; they care not how much their behavior is to the dishonor of God. He offers them mercy, if they will repent and return; but they despise his mercy as well as his wrath. God calleth, but they refuse.—Thus they are continually plunging themselves deeper and deeper in debt, and at the same time imagine they shall escape the payment of the debt, and design entirely to rob God of his due.

But God hath undertaken to right himself. He will reckon with them; he hath undertaken to see that the debts due to him are paid. All their sins are written in his book; not one of them is forgotten, and every one must be paid. If God be wise enough, and strong enough, he will have full satisfaction: he will exact the very uttermost farthing. He undertakes it as his part, as what belongs to him, to see himself righted, wherein he hath been wronged. Deut. xxxii. 35, "To me belongeth vengeance." Chap. vii. 10, "He will not be slack to him that hateth him; he will repay him to his face."

2. He hath undertaken to vindicate the honor of his Majesty. His Majesty they despise. They hear that he is a great God; but they despise his greatness; they look upon him worthy of contempt, and treat him accordingly They hear of him by the name of a great King; but his authority they regard not, and sometimes trample upon it for years together.

But God hath not left the honor of his Majesty wholly to their care. Though they now trample it in the dust, yet that is no sign that it will finally be lost. If God had left it wholly in their hands, it would indeed be lost. But God doth not leave his honor and his glory to his enemies; it is too precious in his eyes to be so neglected. He hath reserved the care of it to himself: he will see to it that his own injured Majesty is vindicated. If the honor of God, upon which sinners trample, finally lie in the dust, then it will be because he is not strong enough to vindicate himself. He hath sworn that great oath in Numb. xiv. 21, "As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord."

Sinners despise his Son, and trample him under their feet. But he will see if he cannot make the glory of his Son appear, with respect to them; that all the earth may know how evil a thing it is to despise the Son of God.—God intends that all men and angels, all heaven and all earth, shall see whether he be sufficient to magnify himself upon sinners who now despise him. He intends that the issue of things with respect to them shall be open, that all men may see it.

3. He hath undertaken to subdue impenitent sinners. Their hearts while in this world are very unsubdued. They lift up their heads and conduct themselves very proudly and contemptuously, and often sin with a high hand. They set their mouths against the heavens, and their tongues walk through the earth. They practically say as Pharaoh did, "Who is the Lord? I know not the Lord, neither will I obey his voice." Job xxi. 41, "They say to God, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways."

Some, who cover their sin with specious show, who put on a face of reli-

gion, and a demure countenance and behavior, yet have this spirit secretly reigning in their breasts. Notwithstanding all their fair show, and good external carriage, they despise God in their hearts, and have the weapons of war about them, though they are secret enemies, and carry their swords under their skirts. They have most proud, stubborn, and rebellious hearts, which are ready to rise in opposition, to contend with him, and to find fault with his dispensations Their hearts are full of pride, enmity, stubbornness, and blasphemy, which work in them many ways, while they sit under the preaching of the word, and while the spirit of God is striving with them: and they always continue to oppose and resist God as long as they live in the world; they never lay down the weapons of their rebellion.

But God hath undertaken to deal with them and to subdue them; and those proud and stubborn hearts, which will not yield to the power of God's word, shall be broken by the power of his hand. If they will not be willing subjects to the golden sceptre, and will not yield to the attractives of his love, they shall be subject to the force of the iron rod, whether they will or no.

Them that proudly set up their own righteousness, and their own wills against God, God hath undertaken to bring down; and without doubt it will be done. He hath undertaken to make those who are now regardless of God, regard him. They shall know that he is Jehovah. Now they will not own that he is the Lord; but they shall know it. Isa. xxvi. 11, "Lord, when thine hand is lifted up, they will not see: but they shall see."

Now wicked men not only hate God, but they slight him; they are not afraid of him. But he will subdue their contempt. When he shall come to take them in hand, they will hate him still; but they will not slight him; they will not make light of his power as they now do; they will see and feel too much of the infinity of his power to slight it.—They are now wont to slight his wrath; but then they will slight it no more, they will be infinitely far from it, they will find by sufficient experience that his wrath is not to be slighted: they will learn this to their cost, and they never will forget it.

4. God hath undertaken to rectify their judgments. Now they will not be convinced of those things which God tells them in his word. Ministers take much pains to convince them, but all is in vain. Therefore God will undertake to convince them, and he will do it effectually.—Now they will not be convinced of the truth of divine things. They have indeed convincing arguments set before them; they hear and see enough to convince them; yet so prone are they to unbelief and atheism, that divine things never seem to them to be real. But God will hereafter make them seem real.

Now they are always doubting of the truth of the Scriptures, questioning whether they be the word of God, and whether the threatenings of Scripture be true. But God hath undertaken to convince them that those threatenings are true, and he will make them to know that they are true, so that they will never doubt any more forever. They will be convinced by dear experience.—Now they are always questioning whether there be any such place as hell. They hear much about it, but it always seems to them like a dream. But God will make it seem otherwise than a dream.—Now they are often told of the vanity of the world; but we may as well preach to the beasts, to persuade them of the vanity of earthly things. But God will undertake to convince them of this; he will hereafter give them a thorough conviction of it, so that they shall have a strong sense of the vanity of all these things.

Now ministers often tell sinners of the great importance of an interest in Christ, and that that is the one thing needful. They are also told the folly of de-

aying the care of their souls, and how much it concerns them to improve their opportunity. But the instructions of ministers do not convince them, therefore, God will undertake to convince them.

Impenitent sinners, while in this world, hear how dreadful hell is. But they will not believe that it is so dreadful as ministers represent. They cannot think that they shall to all eternity suffer such exquisite and horrible torments. But they shall be taught and convinced to purpose, that the representations ministers give of those torments, agreeable to the word of God, are no bugbears; and that the wrath of God is indeed as dreadful as they declare.—Since God hath undertaken to deal with sinners, and to rectify their judgments in these matters, he will do it thoroughly; for his work is perfect; when he undertakes to do things, he doth not do them by halves; therefore before he shall have done with sinners, he will convince them effectually, so that they shall never be in danger of relapsing into their former errors any more. He will convince them of their folly and stupidity in entertaining such notions as they now entertain.

Thus God hath undertaken to deal with obstinate unbelievers. They carry things on in great confusion; but we need not be dismayed at it; let us wait, and we shall see that God will rectify things. Sinners will not always continue to rebel and despise with impunity. The honor of God will in due time be vindicated; and they shall be subdued and convicted, and shall give an account. There is no sin, not so much as an idle word that they shall speak, but they must give an account of it, Matt. xii. 36. And their sins must be fully balanced, and recompensed, and satisfaction obtained. Because judgment against their evil works is not speedily executed, their hearts are fully set in them to do evil. Yet God is a righteous judge; he will see that judgment is executed in due time.

I come now,

II. To show, that therefore impenitent sinners shall not avoid their due punishment.—God hath undertaken to inflict it; he hath engaged to do it; he takes it as his work, as what properly belongs to him, and we may expect it of him. If he hath sworn by his life, that he will do it; and if he hath power sufficient; if he is the living God, doubtless we shall see it done. And that God hath declared that he will punish impenitent sinners, is manifest from many Scriptures; as Deut. xxxii. 41, "I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me." Deut. vii. 10, "He will not be slack to him that hateth him: he will repay him to his face." Exod. xxxiv. 7, "That will by no means clear the guilty." Nahum i. 3, "The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked."

God saith in the text, "I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it;" which leaves no room to doubt of the actual fulfilment of the threatening in its utmost extent.—Some wicked men have flattered themselves, that although God hath threatened very dreadful things to wicked men for their sins, yet in his heart he never intends to fulfil his threatenings, but only to terrify them, and make them afraid, while they live. But would the infinitely holy God, who is not a man that he should lie, and who speaketh no vain words, utter himself in this manner: *I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it; I have not only threatened, but I will also fulfil my threatenings;* when at the same time these words did not agree with his heart, but he secretly knew that though he had spoken, yet he intended not to do it? Who is he that dares to entertain such horrid blasphemy in his heart?

No; let no impenitent sinner flatter himself so vainly and foolishly. If it were indeed only a man, a being of like impotency and mutability with themselves, who had undertaken to deal with them; they might perhaps with some

reason flatter themselves, that they should find some means to avoid the threatened punishment. But since an omniscient, omnipotent, immutable God hath undertaken, vain are all such hopes.

There is no hope that possibly they may steal away to heaven, though they die unconverted. There is no hope that they can deceive God by any false show of repentance and faith, and so be taken to heaven through mistake; for the eyes of God are as a flame of fire; they perfectly see through every man; the inmost closet of the heart is all open to him.

There is no hope of escaping the threatened punishment by sinking into nothing at death, like brute creatures. Indeed, many wicked men upon their death-beds wish for this. If it were so, death would be nothing to them in comparison with what it now is. But all such wishes are vain.

There is no hope of their escaping without notice, when they leave the body. There is no hope that God, by reason of the multiplicity of affairs which he hath to mind, will happen to overlook them, and not take notice of them, when they come to die; and so that their souls will slip away privately, and hide themselves in some secret corner, and so escape divine vengeance.

There is no hope that they shall be missed in a crowd at the day of judgment, and that they can have opportunity to hide themselves in some cave or den of the mountains, or in any secret hole of the earth; and that while so doing, they will not be minded, by reason of the many things which will be the objects of attention on that day.—Neither is there any hope that they will be able to crowd themselves in among the multitude of the saints at the right hand of the Judge, and so go to heaven undiscovered.—Nor is there any hope that God will alter his mind, or that he will repent of what he hath said; for he is not the son of man that he should repent. Hath he said, and shall he not do it? Hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? When did God ever undertake to do any thing and fail?

I come now,

III. To show that as impenitent sinners cannot shun the threatened punishment; so neither can they do any thing to deliver themselves from it, or to relieve themselves under it. This is implied in those words of the text, *Can thine hands be strong?* It is with our hands that we make and accomplish things for ourselves. But the wicked in hell will have no strength of hand to accomplish any thing at all for themselves, or to bring to pass any deliverance, or any degree of relief.

1. They will not be able in that conflict to overcome their enemy, and so to deliver themselves. God, who will then undertake to deal with them, and will gird himself with might to execute wrath, will be their enemy, and will act the part of an enemy with a witness; and they will have no strength to oppose him. Those who live negligent of their souls under the light of the gospel, act as if they supposed that they should be able hereafter to make their part good with God. 1 Cor. x. 22, "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?"—But they will have no power, no might to resist that omnipotence, which will be engaged against them.

2. They will have no strength in their hands to do any thing to appease God, or in the least to abate the fierceness of his wrath. They will not be able to offer any satisfaction: they will not be able to procure God's pity. Though they cry, God will not hear them. They will find no price to offer to God, in order to purchase any favor, or to pay any part of their debt.

3. They will not be able to find any to befriend them, and intercede with God for them. They had the offer of a mediator often made them in this

world; but they will have no offers of such a nature in hell. None will befriend them. They will have no friend in HELL; all there will be their enemies. They will have no friend in heaven: none of the saints or angels will befriend them; or if they should, it would be to no purpose. There will be no creature that will have any power to deliver them, nor will any ever pity them.

4. Nor will they ever be able to make their escape. They will find no means to break prison and flee. In hell they will be reserved in chains of darkness forever and ever. Malefactors have often found means to break prison, and escape the hand of civil justice. But none ever escaped out of the prison of hell, which is God's prison. It is a strong prison: it is beyond any finite power, or the united strength of all wicked men and devils, to unlock, or break open the door of that prison. Christ hath the key of hell; "he shuts and no man opens."

5. Nor will they ever be able to find any thing to relieve them in hell They will never find any resting place there; any place of respite; any secret corner, which will be cooler than the rest, where they may have a little respite, a small abatement of the extremity of their torment. They never will be able to find any cooling stream or fountain, in any part of that world of torment; no, nor so much as a drop of water to cool their tongues. They will find no company to give them any comfort, or to do them the least good. They will find no place, where they can remain, and rest, and take breath for one minute: for they will be tormented with fire and brimstone; and will have no rest day nor night forever and ever.

Thus impenitent sinners will be able neither to shun the punishment threatened, nor to deliver themselves from it, nor to find any relief under it.

I come now,

IV. To show, that neither will they be able to bear it. Neither will their hands be strong to deliver themselves from it, nor will their hearts be able to endure it. It is common with men, when they meet with calamities in this world, in the first place to endeavor to shun them. But if they find, that they cannot shun them, then after they are come, they endeavor to deliver themselves from them as soon as they can; or at least, to order things so, as to deliver themselves in some degree. But if they find that they can by no means deliver themselves, and see that the case is so that they must bear them; then they set themselves to bear them: they fortify their spirits, and take up a resolution, that they will support themselves under them as well as they can. They clothe themselves with all the resolution and courage they are masters of, to keep their spirits from sinking under their calamities.

But it will be utterly in vain for impenitent sinners to think to do thus with respect to the torments of hell. They will not be able to endure them, or at all to support themselves under them: the torment will be immensely beyond their strength. What will it signify for a worm, which is about to be pressed under the weight of some great rock, to be let fall with its whole weight upon it, to collect its strength, to set itself to bear up the weight of the rock, and to preserve itself from being crushed by it? Much more in vain will it be for a poor damned soul, to endeavor to support itself under the weight of the wrath of Almighty God. What is the strength of man, who is but a worm, to support himself against the power of Jehovah, and against the fierceness of his wrath? What is man's strength, when set to bear up against the exertions of infinite power? Matt. xxi, 44, "Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."

When sinners hear of hell torments, they sometimes think with themselves:

Well, if it shall come to that, that I must go to hell, I will bear it as well as I can: as if by clothing themselves with resolution and firmness of mind, they would be able to support themselves in some measure; when, alas! they will have no resolution, no courage at all. However they shall have prepared themselves, and collected their strength; yet as soon as they shall begin to feel that wrath, their hearts will melt and be as water. However before they may seem to harden their hearts, in order to prepare themselves to bear, yet the first moment they feel it, their hearts will become like wax before the furnace. Their courage and resolution will be all gone in an instant; it will vanish away like a shadow in the twirkling of an eye. The stoutest and most sturdy will have no more courage than the feeblest infant: let a man be an infant, or a giant, it will be all one. They will not be able to keep alive any courage, any strength, any comfort, any hope at all.

I come now as was proposed,

V. To answer an inquiry which may naturally be raised concerning these things.

Inquiry. Some may be ready to say, If this be the case, if impenitent sinners can neither shun future punishment, nor deliver themselves from it, nor bear it; then what will become of them?

Answer. They will wholly sink down into eternal death. There will be that sinking of heart, of which we now cannot conceive. We see how it is with the body when in extreme pain. The nature of the body will support itself for a considerable time under very great pain, so as to keep from wholly sinking. There will be great struggles, lamentable groans and panting, and it may be convulsions. These are the strugglings of nature to support itself under the extremity of the pain. There is, as it were, a great lothness in nature to yield to it; it cannot bear wholly to sink.

But yet sometimes pain of body is so very extreme and exquisite, that the nature of the body cannot support itself under it; however loth it may be to sink, yet it cannot bear the pain; there are a few struggles, and throes, and pantings, and it may be a shriek or two, and then nature yields to the violence of the torments, sinks down, and the body dies. This is the death of the body So it will be with the soul in hell; it will have no strength or power to deliver itself; and its torment and horror will be so great, so mighty, so vastly disproportioned to its strength, that having no strength in the least to support itself, although it be infinitely contrary to the nature and inclination of the soul utterly to sink; yet it will sink, it will utterly and totally sink, without the least degree of remaining comfort, or strength, or courage, or hope. And though it will never be annihilated, its being and perception will never be abolished, yet such will be the infinite depth of gloominess that it will sink into, that it will be in a state of death, eternal death.

The nature of man desires happiness; it is the nature of the soul to crave and thirst after well-being; and if it be under misery, it eagerly pants after relief; and the greater the misery is, the more eagerly doth it struggle for help. But if all relief be withholden, all strength overborne, all support utterly gone; then it sinks into the darkness of death.

We can conceive but little of the matter; we cannot conceive what that sinking of the soul in such a case is. But to help your conception, imagine yourself to be cast into a fiery oven, all of a glowing heat, or into the midst of a glowing brick-kiln, or of a great furnace, where your pain would be as much greater than that occasioned by accidentally touching a coal of fire, as the heat is greater. Imagine also that your body were to lie there for a quarter of an

hour, full of fire, as full within and without as a bright coal of fire, all the while full of quick sense; what horror would you feel at the entrance of such a furnace! And how long would that quarter of an hour seem to you! If it were to be measured by a glass, how long would the glass seem to be running! And after you had endured it for one minute, how overbearing would it be to you to think that you had it to endure the other fourteen!

But what would be the effect on your soul, if you knew you must lie there enduring that torment to the full for twenty-four hours! And how much greater would be the effect, if you knew you must endure it for a whole year; and how vastly greater still, if you knew you must endure it for a thousand years! O then, how would your heart sink, if you thought, if you knew, that you must bear it forever and ever! That there would be no end! That after millions of millions of ages, your torment would be no nearer to an end, than ever it was; and that you never, never should be delivered!

But your torment in hell will be immensely greater than this illustration represents. How then will the heart of a poor creature sink under it! How utterly inexpressible and inconceivable must the sinking of the soul be in such a case!

This is the death threatened in the law. This is dying in the highest sense of the word. This is to die sensibly; to die and know it; to be sensible of the gloom of death. This is to be undone; this is worthy of the name of destruction. This sinking of the soul under an infinite weight, which it cannot bear, is the gloom of hell. We read in Scripture of the blackness of darkness; this is it, this is the very thing. We read in Scripture of sinners being lost, and of their losing their souls: this is the thing intended; this is to lose the soul: they that are the subjects of this are utterly lost.

APPLICATION.

This subject may be applied in a use of *awakening* to impenitent sinners. What hath been said under this doctrine is for thee, O impenitent sinner, O poor wretch, who art in the same miserable state in which thou camest into the world, excepting that thou art loaded with vastly greater guilt by thine actual sins. These dreadful things which thou hast heard are for thee, who art yet unconverted, and still remainest an alien and stranger, without Christ and without God in the world. They are for thee, who to this day remainest an enemy to God, and a child of the devil, even in this remarkable season, when others both here and elsewhere, far and near, are flocking to Christ; for thee who hearest the noise, the fame of these things, but knowest nothing of the power of godliness in thine own heart.

Whoever thou art, whether young or old, little or great, if thou art in a Christless, unconverted state, this is the wrath, this is the death to which thou art condemned. This is the wrath that abideth on thee; this is the hell over which thou hangest, and into which thou art ready to drop every day and every night.

If thou shalt remain blind, and hard, and dead in sin a little longer, this destruction will come upon thee: God hath spoken and he will do it. It is vain for thee to flatter thyself with hopes that thou shalt avoid it, or to say in thine heart, perhaps it will not be; perhaps it will not be just so; perhaps things have been represented worse than they are. If thou wilt not be convinced by the word preached to thee by men in the name of God, God himself will undertake to convince thee, Ezek. xiv. 4, 7, 8.

Doth it seem to thee not real that thou shalt suffer such a dreadful destruc-

tion, because it seems to thee that thou dost not deserve it? And because thou dost not see any thing so horrid in thyself, as to answer such a dreadful punishment?—Why is it that thy wickedness doth not seem bad enough to deserve this punishment? The reason is, that thou lovest thy wickedness; thy wickedness seems good to thee; it appears lovely to thee; thou dost not see any hatefulness in it, or to be sure, any such hatefulness as to answer such misery.

But know, thou stupid, blind, hardened wretch, that God doth not see, as thou seest with thy polluted eyes: thy sins in his sight are infinitely abominable.—Thou knowest that thou hast a thousand and a thousand times made light of the Majesty of God. And why should not that Majesty, which thou hast thus despised, be manifested in the greatness of thy punishment? Thou hast often heard what a great and dreadful God Jehovah is; but thou hast made so light of it, that thou hast not been afraid of him, thou hast not been afraid to sin against him, nor to go on day after day, by thy sins, to provoke him to wrath, nor to cast his commands under foot, and trample on them. Now why may not God, in the greatness of thy destruction, justly vindicate and manifest the greatness of that Majesty, which thou hast despised?

Thou hast despised the mighty power of God; thou hast not been afraid of it. Now why is it not fit that God should show the greatness of his power in thy ruin? What king is there who will not show his authority in the punishment of those subjects that despise it! And who will not vindicate his royal majesty in executing vengeance on those that rise in rebellion? And art thou such a fool as to think that the great King of heaven and earth, before whom all other kings are so many grasshoppers, will not vindicate his kingly Majesty on such contemptuous rebels as thou art?—Thou art very much mistaken if thou thinkest so. If thou be regardless of God's Majesty, be it known to thee, God is not regardless of his own Majesty; he taketh care of the honor of it, and he will vindicate it.

Think it not strange that God should deal so severely with thee, or that the wrath which thou shalt suffer should be so great. For as great as it is, it is no greater than that love of God which thou hast despised. The love of God, and his grace, condescension, and pity to sinners in sending his Son into the world to die for them, is every whit as great and wonderful as this inexpressible wrath. This mercy hath been held forth to thee, and described in its wonderful greatness hundreds of times, and as often hath it been offered to thee; but thou wouldst not accept Christ; thou wouldst not have this great love of God; thou despisedst God's dying love; thou trampledst the benefits of it under foot. Now why shouldst thou not have wrath as great as that love and mercy which thou despisest and rejectest? Doth it seem incredible to thee, that God should so harden his heart against a poor sinner, as so to destroy him, and to bear him down with infinite power and merciless wrath? And is this a greater thing than it is for thee to harden thy heart, as thou hast done, against infinite mercy, and against the dying love of God?

Doth it seem to thee incredible, that God should be so utterly regardless of the sinner's welfare, as so to sink him into an infinite abyss of misery? Is this shocking to thee? And is it not at all shocking to thee, that thou shouldst be so utterly regardless as thou hast been of the honor and glory of the infinite God?

It arises from thy foolish stupidity and senselessness, and is because thou hast a heart of stone, that thou art so senseless of thine own wickedness as to think thou hast not deserved such a punishment, and that it is to thee incredible that it will be inflicted upon thee.—But if, when all is said and done

thou be not convinced, wait but a little while, and thou wilt be convinced: God will undertake to do the work which ministers cannot do.—Though judgment against thine evil works be not yet executed, and God now let thee alone, yet he will soon come upon thee with his great power, and then thou shalt know what God is, and what thou art.

Flatter not thyself, that if these things shall prove true, and the worst shall come, thou wilt set thyself to bear it as well as thou canst. What will it signify to set thyself to bear, and to collect thy strength to support thyself, when thou shalt fall into the hands of that omnipotent King, Jehovah? He that made thee, can make his sword approach unto thee. His sword is not the sword of man, nor is his wrath the wrath of man. If it were, possibly stoutness might be maintained under it. But it is the fierceness of the wrath of the great God, who is able to baffle and dissipate all thy strength in a moment. He can fill thy poor soul with an ocean of wrath, a deluge of fire and brimstone; or he can make it ten thousand times fuller of torment than ever an oven was full of fire; and at the same time, can fill it with despair of ever seeing any end to its torment, or any rest from its misery: and then where will be thy strength? What will become of thy courage then? What will signify thine attempts to bear?

What art thou in the hands of the great God, who made heaven and earth by speaking a word? What art thou, when dealt with by that strength, which manages all this vast universe, holds the globe of the earth, directs all the motions of the heavenly bodies from age to age, and, when the fixed time shall come, will shake all to pieces?—There are other wicked beings a thousand times stronger than thou: there are the great leviathans, strong and proud spirits, of a gigantic stoutness and hardiness. But how little are they in the hands of the great God! They are less than weak infants; they are nothing, and less than nothing in the hands of an angry God, as will appear at the day of judgment. Their hearts will be broken; they will sink; they will have no strength nor courage left; they will be as weak as water; their souls will sink down into an infinite gloom, an abyss of death and despair.—Then what will become of thee, a poor worm, when thou shalt fall into the hands of that God, when he shall come to show his wrath, and make his power known on thee?

If the strength of all the wicked men on earth, and of all the devils in hell, were united in one, and thou wert possessed of it all; and if the courage, greatness, and stoutness of all their hearts were united in thy single heart, thou wouldst be nothing in the hands of Jehovah. If it were all collected, and thou shouldst set thyself to bear as well as thou couldst, all would sink under his great wrath in an instant, and would be utterly abolished: thine hands would drop down at once and thine heart would melt as wax.—The great mountains, the firm rocks, cannot stand before the power of God; as fast as they stand, they are tossed hither and thither, and skip like lambs, when God appears in his anger. He can tear the earth in pieces in a moment; yea, he can shatter the whole universe, and dash it to pieces at one blow. How then will thine hands be strong, or thine heart endure?

Thou canst not stand before a lion of the forest; an angry wild beast, if stirred up, will easily tear such a one as thou art in pieces. Yea, not only so, but thou art crushed before the moth. A very little thing, a little worm or spider, or some such insect, is able to kill thee. What then canst thou do in the hands of God? It is vain to set the briers and thorns in battle array against glowing flames; the points of thorns, though sharp, do nothing to withstand the fire.

Some of you have seen buildings on fire; imagine therefore with yourselves,

what a poor hand you would make at fighting with the flames, if you were in the midst of so great and fierce a fire. You have often seen a spider, or some other noisome insect, when thrown into the midst of a fierce fire, and have observed how immediately it yields to the force of the flames. There is no long struggle, no fighting against the fire, no strength exerted to oppose the heat, or to fly from it; but it immediately stretches forth itself and yields; and the fire takes possession of it, and at once it becomes full of fire, and is burned into a bright coal.—Here is a little image of what you will be the subjects of in hell, except you repent and fly to Christ. However you may think that you will fortify yourselves, and bear as well as you can; the first moment you shall be cast into hell, all your strength will sink and be utterly abolished. To encourage yourselves, that you will set yourselves to bear hell torments as well as you can, is just as if a worm, that is about to be thrown into a glowing furnace, should swell and fortify itself, and prepare itself to fight the flames.

What can you do with lightnings? What doth it signify to fight with them? What an absurd figure would a poor weak man make, who, in a thunder-storm, should expect a flash of lightning on his head or his breast, and should go forth sword in hand to oppose it; when a stream of brimstone would, in an instant, drink up all his spirits and his life, and melt his sword!

Consider these things, all you enemies of God, and rejecters of Christ, whether you be old men or women, Christless heads of families, or young people and wicked children. Be assured, that if you do not hearken and repent, God intends to show his wrath, and make his power known upon you. He intends to magnify himself exceedingly in sinking you down in hell. He intends to show his great majesty at the day of judgment, before a vast assembly, in your misery; before a greater assembly many thousandfold than ever yet appeared on earth; before a vast assembly of saints, and a vast assembly of wicked men, a vast assembly of holy angels, and before all the crew of devils. God will before all these get himself honor in your destruction; you shall be tormented in the presence of them all.—Then all will see that God is a great God indeed; then all will see how dreadful a thing it is to sin against such a God, and to reject such a Saviour, such love and grace, as you have rejected and despised. All will be filled with awe at the great sight, and all the saints and angels will look upon you, and adore that majesty, and that mighty power, and that holiness and justice of God, which shall appear in your ineffable destruction and misery.

It is probable that here are some, who hear me this day, who at this very moment are unawakened, and are in a great degree careless about their souls. I fear there are some among us who are most fearfully hardened: their hearts are harder than the very rocks. It is easier to make impressions upon an adamant than upon their hearts. I suppose some of you have heard all that I have said with ease and quietness: it appears to you as great big sounding words, but doth not reach your hearts. You have heard such things many times: you are old soldiers, and have been too much used to the roaring of Heaven's cannon, to be frighted at it. It will therefore probably be in vain for me to say any thing further to you; I will only put you in mind that erelong God will deal with you. I cannot deal with you, you despise what I say; I have no power to make you sensible of your danger and misery, and of the dreadfulness of the wrath of God. The attempts of men in this way have often proved vain.

However, God hath undertaken to deal with such men as you are. It is his manner commonly first to let men try their utmost strength: particularly to let ministers try, that thus he may show ministers their own weakness and

impotency; and when they have done what they can, and all fails, then God takes the matter into his own hands.—So it seems by your obstinacy, as if God intended to undertake to deal with you. He will undertake to subdue you; he will see if he cannot cure you of your senselessness and regardlessness of his threatenings. And you will be convinced; you will be subdued effectually; your hearts will be broken with a witness; your strength will be utterly broken, your courage and hope will sink. God will surely break those who will not bow.—God, having girded himself with his power and wrath, hath heretofore undertaken to deal with many hard, stubborn, senseless, obstinate hearts; and he never failed, he always did his work thoroughly.

It will not be long before you will be wonderfully changed. You who now hear of hell and the wrath of the great God, and sit here in these seats so easy and quiet, and go away so careless; by and by will shake, and tremble, and cry out, and shriek, and gnash your teeth, and will be thoroughly convinced of the vast weight and importance of these great things, which you now despise. You will not then need to hear sermons in order to make you sensible; you will be at a sufficient distance from slighting that wrath and power of God, of which you now hear with so much quietness and indifference.

SERMON XI

THE ETERNITY OF HELL TORMENTS.

MATTHEW XXV. 46.—These shall go away into everlasting punishment.

IN this chapter we have the most particular description of the day of judgment, of any that we have in the whole Bible. Christ here declares, that when he shall hereafter sit on the throne of his glory, the righteous and the wicked shall be set before him, and separated one from the other, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. Then we have an account how both will be judged according to their works; how the good works of the one and the evil works of the other will be rehearsed, and how the sentence shall be pronounced accordingly. We are told what the sentence will be on each, and then in the verse of the text, we have an account of the execution of the sentence on both the righteous and the wicked. In the words of the text is the account of the execution of the sentence on the wicked or the ungodly: concerning which, it is to my purpose to observe two things.

1. The duration of the punishment on which they are here said to enter: it is called *everlasting* punishment.

2. The time of their entrance on this everlasting punishment; viz., after the day of judgment, at the end of the world, when all these things that are of a temporary continuance shall have come to an end, and even those of them that are most lasting, the frame of the world itself; the earth, which is said to abide forever; the ancient mountains and everlasting hills; the sun, moon and stars. When the heavens shall have waxed old like a garment, and as a vesture shall be changed, then shall be the time when the wicked shall enter on their punishment.

DOCTRINE. The misery of the wicked in hell will be absolutely eternal.

There are two diverse opinions that I mean to oppose in this doctrine. One is, that the eternal death that wicked men are threatened with in Scripture, signifies no more than eternal annihilation; that men will be the subjects of eternal death, as they will be slain, and their life finally and forever be extinguished by God's anger; that God will punish their wickedness by eternally abolishing their being, and so that they shall suffer eternal death in this sense, that they shall be eternally dead, and never more come to life.

The other opinion which I mean to oppose, is, that though the punishment of the wicked shall consist in sensible misery, yet it shall not be absolutely eternal; but only of a very long continuance.

Therefore to establish the doctrine in opposition to these different opinions, I shall undertake to show,

I. That it is not contrary to the divine perfections to inflict on wicked men a punishment that is absolutely eternal.

II. That the eternal death which God threatens, is not annihilation, but an abiding sensible punishment or misery.

III. That this misery will not only continue for a very long time, but will be absolutely without end.

IV. That various good ends will be obtained by the eternal punishment of the wicked.

I. I am to show that it is not contrary to the divine perfections to inflict on wicked men a punishment that is absolutely eternal.

This is the sum of the objections usually made against this doctrine, that it is inconsistent with the justice, and especially with the *mercy* of God. And some say, if it be strictly *just*, yet how can we suppose that a merciful God can bear eternally to torment his creatures?

1. Then I shall briefly show, that it is not inconsistent with the justice of God to inflict an eternal punishment. To evince this, I shall use only one argument, viz., that sin is heinous enough to deserve such a punishment, and such a punishment is no more than proportionable to the evil or demerit of sin. If the evil of sin be infinite, as the punishment is, then it is manifest that the punishment is no more than proportionable to the sin punished, and is no more than sin deserves. And if the obligation to love, honor, and obey God be infinite, then sin, which is the violation of this obligation, is a violation of infinite obligation, and so is an infinite evil. Again, if God be infinitely worthy of love, honor, and obedience, then our obligation to love, and honor, and obey him is infinitely great. So that God being infinitely glorious, or infinitely worthy of our love, honor, and obedience; our obligation to love, honor, and obey him, and so to avoid all sin, is infinitely great. Again, our obligation to love, honor, and obey God being infinitely great, sin is the violation of infinite obligation, and so is an infinite evil. Once more, sin being an infinite evil deserves an infinite punishment, an infinite punishment is no more than it deserves: therefore such punishment is just; which was the thing to be proved. There is no evading the force of this reasoning, but by denying that God, the sovereign of the universe, is infinitely glorious; which I presume none of my hearers will adventure to do.

2. I am to show, that it is not inconsistent with the mercy of God, to inflict an eternal punishment on wicked men. It is an unreasonable and unscriptural notion of the mercy of God, that he is merciful in such a sense that he cannot bear that penal justice should be executed. This is to conceive of the mercy of God as a passion to which his nature is so subject that God is liable to be moved, and affected, and overcome by seeing a creature in misery, so that he cannot bear to see justice executed; which is a most unworthy and absurd notion of the mercy of God, and would, if true, argue great weakness. It would be a great defect, and not a perfection, in the Sovereign and Supreme Judge of the world, to be merciful in such a sense that he could not bear to have penal justice executed. It is a very unscriptural notion of the mercy of God. The Scriptures everywhere represent the mercy of God as free and sovereign, and not that the exercises of it are necessary, so that God cannot bear justice should take place. The Scriptures abundantly speak of it as the glory of the divine attribute of mercy, that it is free and sovereign in its exercises; and not that it is so, that God cannot help but deliver sinners from misery. This is a mean and most unworthy idea of the divine mercy.

It is most absurd also as it is contrary to plain fact. For if there be any meaning in the objection, this is is supposed in it, that all misery of the creature, whether just or unjust, is in itself contrary to the nature of God. For if his misery be of such nature that a very great degree of misery, though just, is contrary to his nature; then it is only to add to the mercy, and then a less degree of misery is contrary to his nature; again to add further to it, and a still less degree of misery is contrary to his nature. And so, the mercy of God being infinite, all misery must be contrary to his nature; which we see to be contrary to fact; for we see that God in his providence, doth indeed inflict very great calamities on mankind even in this life.

However strong such kind of objections against the eternal misery of the

wicked, may seem to the carnal, senseless hearts of men, as though it were against God's justice and mercy; yet their seeming strength, and its seeming to be incredible that God should give over any of his creatures to such a dreadful calamity, as eternal, helpless misery and torment, altogether arises from a want of a sense of the infinite evil, odiousness and provocation that there is in sin. Hence it seems to us not suitable that any poor creature should be the subject of such misery, because we have no sense of any thing abominable and provoking in any creature answerable to it. If we had, then this infinite calamity would not seem unsuitable. For one thing would but appear answerable and proportionable to another, and so the mind would rest in it as fit and suitable, and no more than what is proper to be ordered by the just, holy and good Governor of the world.

That this is so we may be convinced by this consideration, viz., that when we hear or read, as sometimes we do, of very horrid things committed by some men, as for instance, some horrid instance of cruelty, it may be to some poor innocent child, or some holy martyr; when we read or hear how such and such persons delighted themselves in torturing them with lingering torments; what terrible distress the poor innocent creatures were in under their hands for many days together; and their cruel persecutors, having no regard to their shrieks and cries, only sported themselves with their misery, and would not vouchsafe even to put an end to their lives: I say, when we hear or read of such things, we have a sense of the evil of them, and they make a deep impression on our minds. Hence it seems just, and not only so, but every way fit and suitable, that God should inflict a very terrible punishment on persons who have perpetrated such wickedness: it seems no way disagreeable to any perfection of the Judge of the world; we can think of it without being at all shocked. The reason is that we have a sense of the evil of their conduct, and a sense of the proportio there is between the evil or demerit of their conduct and the punishment.

Just so if we saw a proportion between the evil of sin and eternal punishment, if we saw something in wicked men that should appear as hateful to us, as eternal misery appears dreadful; something that should as much stir up indignation and detestation, as eternal misery does terror; all objections against this doctrine would vanish at once. Though now it seems incredible; though when we hear of it and are so often told of it, we know not how to realize it; though when we hear of such a degree and duration of torments as are held forth in this doctrine, and think what eternity is, it is ready to seem impossible, that such torments should be inflicted on poor feeble creatures by a Creator of infinite mercy: yet this arises principally from these two causes: (1.) That it is so contrary to the depraved inclinations of mankind, they are so averse to the tru h of this doctrine, they hate to believe it, and cannot bear it should be true. (2.) That they see not the suitableness of eternal punishment to the evil of sin; they see not that eternal punishment is proportionable and no more than proportionable to the demerit of sin.

Having thus shown that the eternal punishment of the wicked is not inconsistent with the divine perfections, I shall now proceed further, and show that it is so far from being inconsistent with the divine perfections, that those perfections evidently require it; i. e., they require that sin should have so great a punishment, either in the person who has committed it, or in a surety; and therefore with respect to those who believe not in the surety, and have no interest in him, the divine perfections require that this punishment should be inflicted on them.

This appears, as it is not only not unsuitable that sin should be thus punished,

but it is positively suitable, decent, and proper. If this be made to appear, that it is positively suitable that sin should be thus punished, then it will follow, that the perfections of God require it; for certainly the perfections of God require that that should be done which is proper to be done. The perfection and excellency of the nature of God require that that should take place which is perfect, excellent and proper in its own nature. But that sin should be punished eternally is such a thing; which appears by the following considerations.

1. It is suitable that God should infinitely hate sin, and be an infinite enemy to it. Sin, as I have before shown, is an infinite evil, and therefore is infinitely odious and destestable. It is proper that God should hate every evil, and hate it according to its odious and detestable nature. And sin being infinitely evil and odious, it is proper that God should hate it infinitely.

2. If infinite hatred of sin be suitable to the divine character, then the expressions of such hatred are also suitable to his character. If it be suitable that God should hate sin, then it is suitable he should express that hatred. Because that which is suitable to be, is suitable to be expressed; that which is lovely in itself, is lovely when it appears. If it be suitable that God should be an infinite enemy to sin, or that he should hate it infinitely, then it is suitable that he should act as such an enemy. No possible reason can be given why it is not suitable for God to act as such a one, as it is suitable for him to be. If it be suitable that he should hate and have enmity against sin, then it is suitable for him to express that hatred and enmity in that to which hatred and enmity by its own nature tends.—But certainly hatred in its own nature tends to opposition, and to set itself against that which is hated, and to procure its evil and not its good: and that in proportion to the hatred. Great hatred naturally tends to the great evil, and infinite hatred to the infinite evil of its object.

Whence it follows, that if it be suitable that there should be infinite hatred of sin in God, as I have shown it is, it is suitable that he should execute an infinite punishment on it; and so the perfections of God require that he should punish sin with an infinite, or which is the same thing, with an eternal punishment.

Thus we see not only the great objection against this doctrine answered, but the truth of the doctrine established by reason.

I now proceed further to establish it by considering the remaining particulars under the doctrine.

II. That eternal death or punishment which God threatens to the wicked is not annihilation, but an abiding sensible punishment or misery.

The truth of this proposition will appear by the following particulars.

1. The Scripture everywhere represents the punishment of the wicked, as implying very extreme pains and sufferings; but a state of annihilation is no state of suffering at all. Persons annihilated have no sense or feeling of pain or pleasure, and much less do they feel that punishment which carries in it an extreme pain or suffering. They no more suffer to eternity than they did suffer from eternity.

2. It is agreeable both to Scripture and reason to suppose, that the wicked will be punished in such a manner, that they shall be sensible of the punishment they are under; that they should be sensible that now God has executed and fulfilled what he threatened, and which they disregarded, and would not believe; that they should know themselves that justice takes place upon them; that they should see and find that God vindicates that Majesty which they despised; that they should see that God is not so despicable a being as they thought him to be; that they should be sensible for what they are punished, while they are under

the threatened punishment; that they should be sensible of their own guilt, and should remember their former opportunities and obligations, and should see their own folly and God's justice. If the eternal punishment threatened be eternal annihilation, when it is inflicted, they will never know that it is inflicted; they will never know that God is just in their punishment, or that they have their deserts. And how is this agreeable to the Scripture, in which God threatens, that he will repay the wicked to his face, Deut. vii. 10. And to that in Job xxi. 19, 20. Speaking there of God's punishing wicked men, it is said, "God rewardeth him, and he shall know it; his eyes shall see his destruction, and he shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty." And to that in Ezekiel xxii. 21, 22, "Yea, I will gather you, and blow upon you in the fire of my wrath, and ye shall be melted in the midst thereof. As silver is melted in the midst of the furnace, so shall ye be melted in the midst thereof; and ye shall know that I the Lord have poured out my fury upon you." And how it is agreeable to that expression so often annexed to the threatenings of God's wrath against wicked men, *And ye shall know that I am the Lord.*

3. The Scripture teaches, that the wicked will suffer different degrees of torment, according to the different aggravations of their sins. Matt. v. 22, "Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire." Here Christ teaches us, that the torments of wicked men will be different in different persons, according to the different degrees of their guilt. It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, for Tyre and Sidon, than for the cities where most of Christ's mighty works were wrought. Again, our Lord assures us, that he that knoweth his Lord's will, and prepareth not himself, nor doth according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knoweth not, and committeth things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. These several passages of Scripture prove, that there will be different degrees of punishment in hell; which is utterly inconsistent with the supposition, that that punishment consists in annihilation, in which there can be no degrees, but is the same thing to every one who is a subject of it.

4. The Scriptures are very express and abundant in this matter, that the eternal punishment of the wicked will consist in sensible misery and torment, and not in annihilation. What is said of Judas is worthy to be observed here: "It had been good for that man if he had not been born," Matt. xxvi. 24. This seems plainly to teach us, that the punishment of the wicked is such that their existence, upon the whole, is worse than non-existence. But if their punishment consists merely in annihilation, this is not true. The wicked, in their punishment, are said to *weep* and *wail*, and *gnash their teeth;* which implies not only real existence, but life, knowledge, and activity, and that they are in a very sensible and exquisite manner affected with their punishment. In Isaiah xxxiii. 14, sinners in the state of their punishment are represented *to dwell* with everlasting burnings. But if they are only turned into nothing, where is the foundation for this representation? It is absurd to say, that sinners will *dwell* with annihilation; for there is no *dwelling* in the case. It is also absurd to call annihilation a *burning*, which implies a state of existence, sensibility, and extreme pain; whereas in annihilation, there is neither one nor another of these. The state of the future punishment of the wicked is evidently represented to be a state of existence and sensibility, when it is said, that they shall be cast into a lake of fire and brimstone. How can this expression with any propriety be understood to mean a state of annihilation? Yea, they are

expressly said to *have no rest* day nor night, but to be *tormented* with fire and brimstone forever and ever, Rev. xx. 10. But annihilation is a state of *rest*, a state in which not the least *torment* can possibly be suffered. The rich man in hell *lifted up his eyes being in torment*, and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom, and entered into a particular *conversation* with Abraham; all which proves that he was not annihilated.

The spirits of ungodly men before the resurrection are not in a state of annihilation, but in a state of misery; they are spirits in prison, as the apostle saith of them that were drowned in the flood, 1 Pet. iii. 19. And this appears very plainly from the instance of the rich man before mentioned, if we consider him as representing the wicked in their separate state between death and the resurrection. But if the wicked even then, are in a state of *torment*, much more will they be, when they shall come to suffer that which is the proper punishment of their sins.

Annihilation is not so great a calamity but that some men have undoubtedly chosen it, rather than such a state of suffering as they have been in even in this life. This was the case of Job, a good man. But if a good man in this world may suffer that which is worse than annihilation, doubtless the proper punishment of the wicked, in which God means to manifest his peculiar abhorrence of their wickedness, will be a calamity vastly greater still; and therefore cannot be annihilation. That must be a very mean and contemptible testimony of God's wrath towards those who have rebelled against his crown and dignity, have broken his laws, and despised both his vengeance and his grace, which is not so great a calamity as some of his true children have suffered in life.

The eternal punishment of the wicked is said to be the *second death*, once and again, as Rev. xx. 14, and xxi. 8. It is doubtless called the second death in reference to the death of the body; and as the death of the body is ordinarily attended with great pain and distress, so the like, or something vastly greater, is implied in calling the eternal punishment of the wicked the *second death*; and there would be no propriety in calling it so, if it consisted merely in annihilation. And this second death wicked men will suffer; for it cannot be called the second death with respect to any other than men; it cannot be called so with respect to devils, as they die no temporal death, which is the first death. In Rev. ii. 11. it is said, "He that overcometh, shall not be hurt of the second death;" implying, that all who do not overcome their lusts, but live in sin, shall suffer the second death.

Again, wicked men will suffer the same kind of death with the devils; as in verse 25th of the context, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Now the punishment of the devil is not annihilation, but torment; he therefore trembles for fear of it; not for fear of being annihilated, he would be glad of that. What he is afraid of is torment, as appears by Luke viii. 28, where he cries out, and beseeches Christ, that he would not *torment* him before the time. And it is said, Rev. xx. 10, "The devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be *tormented* day and night, forever and ever."

It is strange how men will go directly against so plain and full revelations of Scripture, as to suppose, notwithstanding all these things, that the eternal punishment threatened against the wicked signifies no more than annihilation.

III. As the future punishment of the wicked consists in sensible misery; so it shall not only continue for a very long time, but shall be absolutely without end.

Of those who have held that the torments of hell are not absolutely eternal,

there have been two sorts. (1.) Some suppose, that in the threatenings of everlasting punishment, the terms used do not necessarily import a proper eternity, but only a very long duration. (2.) Others suppose, that if they do import a proper eternity, yet we cannot necessarily conclude thence, that God will fulfil his threatenings.

Therefore I shall,

FIRST, show that the threatenings of eternal punishment do very plainly and fully import a proper, absolute eternity, and not merely a long duration.

This appears,

1. Because when the Scripture speaks of the wicked's being sentenced to their punishment at the time when all temporal things are come to an end, it then speaks of it as everlasting, as in the text, and elsewhere.—It is true that the term forever is not always in Scripture used to signify eternity. Sometimes it means, as long as a man liveth. In this sense it is said, that the Hebrew servant, who chose to abide with his master, should have his ear bored, and should serve his master forever.—Sometimes it means, during the continuance of the state and church of the Jews. In this sense, several laws, which were peculiar to that church, and were to continue in force no longer than that church should last, are called *statutes forever*. See Exod. xxvii. 21, xxviii. 43, &c.—Sometimes it means as long as the world stands. So in Eccles. i. 4, "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth *forever*."

And this last is the longest temporal duration that such a term is used to signify. There is no instance of using such a term, for a long duration, when it signifies a temporal duration: for the duration of the world is doubtless the longest of any of those things that are temporal, as its beginning was the earliest of any of those things that are temporal. Therefore when the Scripture speaks of things as being before the foundation of the world, it means that they existed from eternity, and before the beginning of time. So those things which continue after the end of the world, are eternal things, and are after the end of time.—Doubtless when the temporal world is at an end, there will be an end to temporal things. When the time comes that heaven and earth are shaken and removed, those things that remain will be things that cannot be shaken, but will remain forever, Heb. xii. 26, 27.—This visible world contains all things that are seen and are temporal; and therefore when that is at an end, there will be an end of all things that are temporal, and therefore the things that remain after that will be eternal.

But the punishment of the wicked will not only remain after the end of the world, but it is called everlasting after that, as in the text, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." So in 2 Thess. i. 9, 10, "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints," &c.—Now, what can be meant by a thing's being everlasting, after all temporal things are come to an end, but that it is absolutely without end?

2. Such expressions are used to set forth the duration of the punishment of the wicked, as are never used in the Scriptures of the New Testament to signify any thing but a proper eternity. It is said, not only that that punishment shall be forever, but forever and ever. Rev. xiv. 11, "The smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever."—Rev. xx. 10, "Shall be tormented day and night, forever and ever."—Doubtless the New Testament has some expression to signify a proper eternity, of which it has so often occasion to speak. But it is ignorant of any higher expression than this: if this do not signify an absolute eternity, there is none that does.

3. The Scripture uses the same way of speaking to set forth the eternity of the punishment of the wicked, that it uses to set forth the eternity of the happiness of the righteous, or the eternity of God himself. Matt. xxv 46, "These shall go away into *everlasting* punishment; but the righteous into life *eternal*."—The words *everlasting* and *eternal*, in the original, are the same. Rev. xxii. 5, "And they (the saints) shall reign forever and ever." And the Scripture has no higher expression to signify the eternity of God himself, than that of his being forever and ever; as Rev. iv. 9, "To him who sat on the throne, who liveth forever and ever," and in the 10th verse, and in chap. v. 14, and chap. x. 6, and chap. xv. 7.

Again the Scripture expresses God's eternity by this, that it shall be forever, after the world has come to an end: Psalm cii. 26, 27, "They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed. But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end."

4. The Scripture says, that wicked men shall not be delivered, till they have paid the uttermost farthing of their debt, Matt. v. 26. Nor till they have paid the last mite, Luke x. 59; i. e., the utmost that is deserved, and all mercy is excluded by this expression. But we have shown that they deserve an infinite, an endless punishment.

5. The Scripture says absolutely, that their punishment shall not have an end: Mark ix. 44, "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." Now, it will not do to say, that the meaning is, their worm shall live a great while, or that it shall be a great while before their fire is quenched. If ever the time comes that their worm shall die; if ever there shall be a quenching of the fire at all, then it is not true that their worm dieth not, and that the fire is not quenched. For if there be a dying of the worm, and a quenching of the fire, let it be at what time it will, nearer or further off, it is equally contrary to such a negation, *it dieth not, it is not quenched.*

SECONDLY, There are others who allow, that the expressions of the threatenings do denote a proper eternity; but then, they say, it doth not certainly follow, that the punishment will really be eternal; because, say they, God may threaten, and yet not fulfil his threatenings. Though they allow that the threatenings are positive and peremptory, without any reserve, yet they say, God is not obliged to fulfil absolute positive threatenings, as he is absolute promises, because in promises a right is conveyed that the creature to whom the promises are made will claim; but there is no danger of the creature's claiming any right by a threatening.—Therefore I am now to show, that what God has positively declared in this matter, does indeed make it certain, that it shall be as he has declared. To this end, I shall mention two things:

I. It is self-evidently contrary to the divine truth, positively to declare any thing to be real, whether past, present, or to come, which God at the same time knows is not so. Absolutely threatening that any thing shall be, is the same as absolutely declaring that it is to be. For any to suppose, that God absolutely declares that any thing will be, which he at the same time knows will not be, is blasphemy, if there be any such thing as blasphemy.

Indeed, it is very true, that there is no obligation on God, arising from the claim of the creature, as there is in promises. They seem to reckon the wrong way, who suppose the necessity of the execution of the threatening to arise from a proper obligation on God to the creature to execute consequent on his threatening. For indeed the certainty of the execution arises the other way, viz., on the obligation there was on the omniscient God, in threatening, to conform his

threatening to what he knew would be future in execution. Though, strictly speaking, God is not properly obliged to the creature to execute, because he has threatened, yet he was obliged not absolutely to threaten, if at the same time he knew that he should not, or would not fulfil, because this would not have been consistent with his truth.—So that from the truth of God there is an inviolable connection between positive threatenings and execution. They that suppose that God absolutely threatened, or positively declared, that he would do contrary to what he knew would come to pass, do therein suppose, that he absolutely threatened contrary to what he knew to be truth. And how any one can speak contrary to what he knows to be truth, in declaring, promising, or threatening, or any other way, consistently with inviolable truth, is inconceivable.

Threatenings are significations of something; and if they are made consistently with truth, they are true significations, or significations of truth, or significations of that which shall be. If absolute threatenings are significations of any thing, they are significations of the futurity of the things threatened. But if the futurity of the things threatened be not true and real, then how can the threatening be a true signification? And if God, in them, speaks contrary to what he knows, and contrary to what he intends, how he can speak true is inconceivable

Absolute threatenings are a kind of predictions; and though God is not properly obliged by any claim of ours to fulfil predictions, unless they are of the nature of promises; yet it certainly would be contrary to truth, to predict and say such a thing would come to pass, which he knew at the same time would not come to pass. Threatenings are declarations of something future, and they must be declarations of future truth, if they are true declarations. Its being future alters not the case any more than if it were present. It is equally contrary to truth, to declare contrary to what at the same time is known to be truth, whether it be of things past, present, or to come; for all are alike to God.

Besides, we have often declarations in Scripture of the future eternal punishment of the wicked, in the proper form of predictions, and not in the form of threatenings. So in the text, These shall go away into everlasting punishment. So in those frequent assertions of eternal punishment in the Revelation, some of which I have already quoted. The Revelation is a prophecy, and is so called in the book itself; so are those declarations of eternal punishment.—The like declarations we have also in many other places of Scripture.

2. The doctrine of those who teach, that it is not certain that God will fulfil those absolute threatenings, is blasphemous another way; and that is, as God, according to their supposition, was obliged to make use of a fallacy to govern the world. They own, that it is needful that men should apprehend themselves liable to an eternal punishment, that they might thereby be restrained from sin, and that God has threatened such a punishment, for the very end that they might believe themselves exposed to it. But what an unworthy opinion does this convey of God and his government, of his infinite majesty, and wisdom, and all-sufficiency!—Besides, they suppose, that though God has made use of such a fallacy, yet it is not such a one but that they have detected him in it. Though God intended men should believe it to be certain, that sinners are liable to an eternal punishment; yet they suppose, that they have been so cunning as to find out that it is not certain; and so that God had not laid his design so deep, but that such cunning men as they can discern the cheat, and defeat the design; because they have found out, that there is no necessary connection between the threatening of eternal punishment, and the execution of that threatening.

Considering these things, is it not greatly to be wondered at, that the great

Archbishop Tillotson, who has made so great a figure among the new fashioned divines, should advance such an opinion as this?

Before I conclude this head, it may be proper for me to answer an objection or two, that may arise in the minds of some.

1. It may be here said, We have instances wherein God hath not fulfilled his threatenings; as his threatening to Adam, and in him to mankind, that they should *surely* die, if they should eat the forbidden fruit. I answer, it is not true that God did not fulfil that threatening: he fulfilled it, and will fulfil it in every jot and tittle.—When God said, "Thou shalt surely die," if we respect spiritual death, it was fulfilled in Adam's person in the day that he ate. God immediately took away his image, his Holy Spirit, and original righteousness, which was the highest and best life of our first parents; and they were immediately in a doleful state of spiritual death.

If we respect temporal death, that was also fulfilled: he brought death upon himself and all his posterity, and he virtually suffered that death on that very day on which he ate. His body was brought into a corruptible, mortal, and dying condition, and so it continued till it was dissolved.—If we look at eternal death, and indeed all that death which was comprehended in the threatening, it was properly speaking, fulfilled in Christ. When God said to Adam, If thou eatest, thou shalt die, he spake not only to him, and of him personally; but the words respected mankind, Adam and his race, and doubtless were so understood by him. His offspring were to be looked upon as sinning in him, and so should die with him. The words do as justly allow of an imputation of death as of sin; they are as well consistent with dying in a surety as with sinning in one. Therefore, the threatening is fulfilled in the death of Christ, the surety.

2. Another objection may arise from God's threatening to Nineveh. He threatened, that in forty days Nineveh should be destroyed, which yet he did not fulfil.—I answer, that threatening could justly be looked upon no otherwise than as conditional. It was of the nature of a warning, and not of an absolute denunciation. Why was Jonah sent to the Ninevites, but to give them warning, that they might have opportunity to repent, reform, and avert the approaching destruction? God had no other design or end in sending the prophet to them, but that they might be warned and tried by him, as God warned the Israelites, and warned Judah and Jerusalem before their destruction. Therefore the prophets, together with their prophecies of approaching destruction, joined earnest exhortations to repent and reform, that it might be averted.

No more could justly be understood to be certainly threatened, than that Nineveh should be destroyed in forty days, *continuing as it was.* For it was for their wickedness that that destruction was threatened, and so the Ninevites took it. Therefore, when the cause was removed the effect ceased.—It was contrary to God's known manner, to threaten punishment and destruction for sin here in this world absolutely, so that it should come upon the persons threatened unavoidably, let them repent and reform and do what they would, agreeably to Jer. xviii. 7, 8: "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation against whom I have pronounced turn from their evil I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them." So that all threatenings of this nature had a condition implied in them, according to the known and declared manner of God's dealing. And the Ninevites did not take it as an absolute sentence or denunciation: if they had they would have despaired of any benefit by fasting and reformation.

But the threatenings of eternal wrath are positive and absolute. There is nothing in the word of God from which we can gather any condition. The only

opportunity of escaping is in this world; this is the only state of trial wherein we have any offers of mercy, or there is any place for repentance.

IV. I shall mention several good and important ends, which will be obtained by the eternal punishment of the wicked.

1. Hereby God vindicates his injured majesty. Wherein sinners cast contempt upon it, and trample it in the dust, God vindicates and honors it, and makes it appear, as it is indeed, infinite, by showing that it is infinitely dreadful to contemn or offend it.

2. God glorifies his justice. The glory of God is the greatest good; it is that which is the chief end of the creation; it is a thing of greater importance than any thing else. But this is one way wherein God will glorify himself, as in the eternal destruction of ungodly men, he will glorify his justice. Therein he will appear as a just governor of the world. The vindictive justice of God will appear strict, exact, awful, and terrible, and therefore glorious.

3. God hereby indirectly glorifies his grace on the vessels of mercy. The saints in heaven will behold the torments of the damned: "The smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever." Isa. lxvi. 24, "And they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched, and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh." And in Rev. xiv. 10, it is said, that they shall be tormented in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb. So they will be tormented in the presence also of the glorified saints.

Hereby the saints will be made the more sensible how great their salvation is. When they shall see how great the misery is from which God hath saved them, and how great a difference he hath made between their state, and the state of others, who were by nature, and perhaps by practice, no more sinful and ill deserving than they, it will give them more of a sense of the wonderfulness of God's grace to them. Every time they look upon the damned, it will excite in them a lively and admiring sense of the grace of God, in making them so to differ. This the apostle informs us is one end of the damnation of ungodly men, Rom. ix. 22, 23: "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endureth with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that he might make known *the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy*, which he had afore prepared unto glory?" The view of the misery of the damned will double the ardor of the love and gratitude of the saints in heaven.

4. The sight of hell torments will exalt the happiness of the saints forever. It will not only make them more sensible of the greatness and freeness of the grace of God in their happiness; but it will really make their happiness the greater, as it will make them more sensible of their own happiness; it will give them a more lively relish of it; it will make them prize it more. When they see others, who were of the same nature, and born under the same circumstances, plunged in such misery, and they so distinguished, O it will make them sensible how happy they are. A sense of the opposite misery, in all cases, greatly increases the relish of any joy or pleasure.

The sight of the wonderful power, the great and dreadful majesty, and awful justice and holiness of God, manifested in the eternal punishment of ungodly men, will make them prize his favor and love vastly the more; and they will be so much the more happy in the enjoyment of it.

APPLICATION.

1. From what hath been said, we may learn the folly and madness of the greater part of mankind, in that for the sake of present momentary gratification,

they run the venture of enduring all these eternal torments. They prefer a small pleasure, or a little wealth, or a little earthly honor and greatness, which can last but for a moment, to an escape from this punishment. If it be true that the torments of hell are eternal, what will it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? What is there in this world, which is not a trifle, and lighter than vanity, in comparison with these eternal things?

How mad are men, who so often hear of these things and pretend to believe them; who can live but a little while, a few years; who do not even expect to live here longer than others of their species ordinarily do; and who yet are careless about what becomes of themselves in another world, where there is no change and no end! How mad are they, when they hear that if they go on in sin, they shall be eternally miserable, that they are not moved by it, but hear it with as much carelessness and coldness as if they were no way concerned in the matter; when they know not but that it may be their case, that they may be suffering these torments before a week is at an end, and that if it should be so, it would be no strange thing, no other than a common thing!

How can men be so careless of such a matter as their own eternal and desperate destruction and torment! What a strange stupor and senslessness possesses the hearts of men! How common a thing is it to see men, who are told from Sabbath to Sabbath of eternal misery, and who are as mortal as other men, so careless about it, that they seem not to be at all restrained by it from whatever their souls lust after! It is not half so much their care to escape eternal misery, as it is to get money and land, and to be considerable in the world, and to gratify their senses. Their thoughts are much more exercised about these things, and much more of their care and concern is about them. Eternal misery, though they lie every day exposed to it, is a thing neglected, it is but now and then thought of, and then with a great deal of stupidity, and not with concern enough to stir them up to do any thing considerable in order to escape it. They are not sensible that it is worth their while to take any considerable pains in order to it. And if they do take pains for a little while, they soon leave off, and something else takes up their thoughts and concern.

Thus you will see it to be among young and old. Multitudes of those who are in youth, lead a careless life, taking little care about their salvation. So you may see it to be among persons of middle age. So it is still with many, when advanced in years, and when they certainly draw near to the grave. Yet these same persons will seem to acknowledge, that the greater part of men go to hell and suffer eternal misery, and this through carelessness about it. However they will do the same. How strange is it that men can enjoy themselves and be at rest, when they are thus hanging over eternal burnings; at the same time, having no lease of their lives, and not knowing how soon the thread by which they hang will break, nor do they pretend to know; and if it breaks, they are gone, they are lost forever, and there is no remedy! Yet they trouble not themselves much about it; nor will they hearken to those who cry to them, and entreat them to take care for themselves, and labor to get out of that dangerous condition: they are not willing to take so much pains: they choose not to be diverted from amusing themselves with those toys and vanities which they have in hand. Thus well might the wise man say, as in Eccles. ix. 3, "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil. Madness is in their heart while they live; and after that they go to the dead."

How much wiser are those few, who make it their main business to lay a foundation for eternity, to secure their salvation!

2. I shall improve this subject in a use of exhortation to sinners, to take care to escape these eternal torments. If they be eternal, one would think that would be enough to awaken your concern, and excite your diligence. If the punishment be eternal, it is infinite, as we said before; and therefore no other evil, no death, no temporary torment that ever you heard of, or that you can imagine, is any thing in comparison with it, but is as much less and less considerable, not only as a grain of sand is less than the whole universe, but as it is less than the boundless space which encompasses the universe. Therefore here,

(1.) Be entreated to consider attentively how great and awful a thing eternity is. Although you cannot comprehend it the more by considering, yet you may be made more sensible that it is not a thing to be disregarded. Do but consider what it is to suffer extreme torment forever and ever; to suffer it day and night, from one day to another, from one year to another, from one age to another, from one thousand ages to another, and so adding age to age, and thousands to thousands, in pain, in wailing and lamenting, groaning and shrieking, and gnashing your teeth; with your souls full of dreadful grief and amazement, with your bodies and every member full of racking torture, without any possibility of getting ease; without any possibility of moving God to pity by your cries; without any possibility of hiding yourselves from him; without any possibility of diverting your thoughts from your pain; without any possibility of obtaining any manner of mitigation, or help, or change for the better any way.

(2.) Do but consider how dreadful despair will be in such torment. How dismal will it be, when you are under these racking torments, to know assuredly that you never, never shall be delivered from them; to have no hope: when you shall wish that you might but be turned into nothing, but shall have no hope of it; when you shall wish that you might be turned into a toad or a serpent, but shall have no hope of it; when you would rejoice, if you might but have any relief, after you shall have endured these torments millions of ages, but shall have no hope of it; when after you shall have worn out the age of the sun, moon, and stars, in your dolorous groans and lamentations, without any rest day or night, or one minute's ease, yet you shall have no hope of ever being delivered; when after you shall have worn out a thousand more such ages, yet you shall have no hope, but shall know that you are not one whit nearer to the end of your torments; but that still there are the same groans, the same shrieks, the same doleful cries, incessantly to be made by you, and that the smoke of your torment shall still ascend up forever and ever; and that your souls, which shall have been agitated with the wrath of God all this while, yet will still exist to bear more wrath; your bodies, which shall have been burning and roasting all this while in these glowing flames, yet shall not have been consumed, but will remain to roast through an eternity yet, which will not have been at all shortened by what shall have been past.

You may by considering make yourselves more sensible than you ordinarily are; but it is a little you can conceive of what it is to have no hope in such torments.

How sinking would it be to you, to endure such pain as you have felt in this world, without any hopes, and to know that you never should be delivered from it, nor have one minute's rest! You can now scarcely conceive how doleful that would be. How much more to endure the vast weight of the wrath of God without hope! The more the damned in hell think of the eternity of their torments, the more amazing will it appear to them; and alas! they are not able to avoid thinking of it, they will not be able to keep it out of their minds. Their tortures will not divert them from it, but will fix their

attention to it. O how dreadful will eternity appear to them after they shall have been thinking on it for ages together, and shall have had so long an experience of their torments!—The damned in hell will have two infinites perpetually to amaze them, and swallow them up: one is an infinite God, whose wrath they will bear, and whom they will behold their perfect and irreconcilable enemy. The other is the infinite duration of their torment.

If it were possible for the damned in hell to have a comprehensive knowledge of eternity, their sorrow and grief would be infinite in degree. The comprehensive view of so much sorrow which they must endure, would cause infinite grief for the present. Though they will not have a comprehensive knowledge of it, yet they will doubtless have a vastly more lively and strong apprehension of it than we can have in this world. Their torments will give them an impression of it. A man in his present state, without any enlargement of his capacity, would have a vastly more lively impression of eternity than he has, if he were only under some pretty sharp pain in some member of his body, and were at the same time assured, that he must endure that pain forever. His pain would give him a greater sense of eternity than other men have. How much more will those excruciating torments, which the damned will suffer, have this effect!

Besides, their capacity will probably be enlarged, their understandings will be quicker and stronger in a future state; and God can give them as great a sense and as strong an impression of eternity, as he pleases, to increase their grief and torment.

O be entreated, ye that are in a Christless state, and are going on in a way to hell, that are daily exposed to damnation, to consider these things. If you do not, it will surely be but a little while before you will experience them, and then you will know how dreadful it is to despair in hell; and it may be before this year, or this month, or this week, is at an end; before another Sabbath, or ever you shall have opportunity to hear another sermon.

(3.) That you may effectually escape these dreadful and eternal torments, be entreated to flee to, and embrace him who came into the world for the very end of saving sinners from these torments, who has paid the whole debt due to the divine law, and exhausted eternal in temporal sufferings. What great encouragement is it to those of you who are sensible that you are exposed to eternal punishment, that there is a Saviour provided, who is able, and who freely offers to save you from that punishment, and that in a way which is perfectly consistent with the glory of God, yea, which is more to the glory of God than it would be if you should suffer the eternal punishment of hell. For if you should suffer that punishment you would never pay the whole of the debt. Those who are sent to hell never will have paid the whole of the debt which they owe to God, nor indeed a part which bears any proportion to the whole. They never will have paid a part which bears so great a proportion to the whole, as one mite to ten thousand talents. Justice therefore never can be actually satisfied in your damnation; but it is actually satisfied in Christ. Therefore he is accepted of the Father, and therefore all who believe are accepted and justified in him. Therefore believe in him, come to him, commit your souls to him to be saved by him. In him you shall be safe from the eternal torments of hell. Nor is that all: but through him you shall inherit inconceivable blessedness and glory, which will be of equal duration with the torments of hell. For as at the last day the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, so shall the righteous, or those who trust in Christ, go into life eternal.

SERMON XII

WHEN THE WICKED SHALL HAVE FILLED UP THE MEASURE OF THEIR SIN, WRATH WILL COME UPON THEM TO THE UTTERMOST.

1 Thess. ii. 16.—To fill up their sins alway; for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.

In verse 14, the apostle commends the Christian Thessalonians that they became the followers of the churches of God in Judea, both in faith and in sufferings; in *faith*, in that they received the word, not as the word of man, but as it is in truth the word of God; in *sufferings*, in that they had suffered like things of their own countrymen as *they* had of the Jews. Upon which the apostle sets forth the persecuting, cruel, and perverse wickedness of that people, "who both killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have," says he, "persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles, that they might be saved." Then come in the words of the text; "To fill up their sins alway; for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost."

In these words we may observe two things:

1. To what effect was the heinous wickedness and obstinacy of the Jews, viz., *to fill up their sins*. God hath set bounds to every man's wickedness; he suffers men to live, and to go on in sin, till they have filled up their measure, and then cuts them off. To this effect was the wickedness and obstinacy of the Jews: they were exceedingly wicked, and thereby filled up the measure of their sins a great pace. And the reason why they were permitted to be so obstinate under the preaching and miracles of Christ, and of the apostles, and under all the means used with them, was, that they might fill up the measure of their sins. This is agreeable to what Christ said, Matt. xxiii. 31, 32, "Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers."

2. The punishment of their wickedness: "The wrath is come upon them to the uttermost." There is a connection between the measure of men's sin, and the measure of punishment. When they have filled up the measure of their sin, then is filled up the measure of God's wrath.

The degree of their punishment, is the *uttermost* degree. This may respect both a national and personal punishment. If we take it as a *national* punishment, a little after the time when the epistle was written, wrath came upon the nation of the Jews to the uttermost, in their terrible destruction by the Romans; when, as Christ said, "was great tribulation, such as never was since the beginning of the world to that time," Matt. xxiv. 21. That nation had before suffered many of the fruits of divine wrath for their sins; but this was beyond all, this was their highest degree of punishment as a nation. If we take it as a *personal* punishment, then it respects their punishment in hell. God often punishes men very dreadfully in this world; but in hell "wrath comes on them to the *uttermost*"—By this expression is also denoted the *certainty* of this punishment. For though the punishment was then future, yet it is spoken of as present: "The wrath *is* come upon them to the uttermost." It was as certain as if it had already taken place. God, who knows all things, speaks of things that are not as though they were; for things present and things future are equally certain with him. It also denotes the *near approach* of it. *The wrath* is *come;*

i e., it is just at hand; it is at the door; as it proved with respect to that nation; their terrible destruction by the Romans was soon after the apostle wrote this epistle.

Doctrine. When those that continue in sin shall have filled up the measure of their sin, then wrath will come upon them to the uttermost.

I. Prop. There is a *certain measure* that God hath set to the sin of every wicked man. God says concerning the sin of man, as he says to the raging waves of the sea, Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further. The measure of some is much greater than of others. Some reprobates commit but a little sin in comparison with others, and so are to endure proportionably a smaller punishment. There are many vessels of wrath; but some are smaller and others greater vessels; some will contain comparatively but little wrath, others a greater measure of it. Sometimes, when we see men go to dreadful lengths, and become very heinously wicked, we are ready to wonder that God lets them alone. He sees them go on in such audacious wickedness, and keeps silence, nor does any thing to interrupt them, but they go smoothly on, and meet with no hurt. But sometimes the reason why God lets them alone is, because they have not filled up the measure of their sins. When they live in dreadful wickedness, they are but filling up the measure which God hath *limited* for them. This is sometimes the reason why God suffers very wicked men to live so long; because their iniquity is not full: Gen. xv. 16, "The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." For this reason also God sometimes suffers them to live in prosperity. Their prosperity is a snare to them, and an occasion of their sinning a great deal more. Wherefore God suffers them to have such a snare, because he suffers them to fill up a larger measure. So, for this cause, he sometimes suffers them to live under great light, and great means and advantages, at the same time to neglect and misimprove all. Every one shall live till he hath filled up his measure.

II. Prop. While men continue in sin, they are filling the measure set them. This is the work in which they spend their whole lives; they begin in their childhood; and if they live to grow old in sin, they still go on with this work. It is the work with which every day is filled up. They may alter their business in other respects; they may sometimes be about one thing, and sometimes about another; but they never change from this work of filling up the measure of their sins. Whatever they put their hands to, they are still employed in this work. This is the first thing that they set themselves about when they awake in the morning, and the last thing they do at night. They are all the while treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. It is a gross mistake of some natural men, who think that when they read and pray they do not add to their sins; but, on the contrary, think they diminish their guilt by these exercises. They think, that instead of adding to their sins, they do something to satisfy for their past offences; but instead of that, they do but add to the measure by their best prayers, and by those services with which they themselves are most pleased.

III. Prop. When once the measure of their sins is filled up, then wrath will come upon them to the uttermost. God will then wait no longer upon them. Wicked men think that God is altogether such a one as themselves, because, when they commit such wickedness, he keeps silence. "Because judgment against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the children of men is fully set in them to do evil." But when once they shall have filled up the measure of their sins, judgment will be executed; God will not bear

with them any longer. Now is the day of grace, and the day of patience, which they spend in filling up their sins; but when their sins shall be full, then will come the day of wrath, the day of the fierce anger of God. God often executes his wrath on ungodly men, in a less degree, in this world. He sometimes brings afflictions upon them, and that in wrath. Sometimes he expresses his wrath in very sore judgments; sometimes he appears in a terrible manner, not only outwardly, but also in the inward expressions of it on their consciences. Some, before they died, have had the wrath of God inflicted on their souls in degrees that have been intolerable. But these things are only forerunners of their punishment, only slight foretastes of wrath. God never stirs up all his wrath against wicked men while in this world; but when once wicked men shall have filled up the measure of their sins, then wrath will come upon them to the uttermost; and that in the following respects:

1. Wrath will come upon them without any *restraint* or moderation in the degree of it. God doth always lay, as it were, a restraint upon himself; he doth not stir up his wrath; he stays his rough wind in the day of his east wind; he lets not his arm light down on wicked men with its full weight. But when sinners shall have filled up the measure of their sins, there will be no caution, no restraint. His rough wind will not be stayed nor moderated. The wrath of God will be poured out like fire. He will come forth, not only in anger, but in the fierceness of his anger; he will execute wrath with power, so as to show what his wrath is, and make his power known. There will be nothing to alleviate his wrath; his heavy wrath will lie on them, without any thing to lighten the burden, or to keep off, in any measure, the full weight of it from pressing the soul.—His eye will not spare, neither will he regard the sinner's cries and lamentations, however loud and bitter. Then shall wicked men know that God is the Lord; they shall know how great that majesty is which they have despised, and how dreadful that threatened wrath is which they have so little regarded. Then shall come on wicked men that punishment which they deserve. God will exact of them the uttermost farthing. Their iniquities are marked before him; they are all written in his book; and in the future world he will reckon with them, and they must pay all the debt. Their sins are laid up in store with God; they are sealed up among his treasures; and them he will recompense, even recompense into their bosoms. The consummate degree of punishment will not be executed till the day of judgment; but the wicked are sealed over to this consummate punishment immediately after death; they are cast into hell, and there bound in chains of darkness to the judgment of the great day; and they know that the highest degree of punishment is coming upon them. Final wrath will be executed without any mixture; all mercy, all enjoyments will be taken away. God sometimes expresses his wrath in this world; but here good things and evil are mixed together; in the future there will be only evil things.

2. Wrath will then be executed without any *merciful* circumstances. The judgments which God executes on ungodly men in this world, are attended with many merciful circumstances. There is much patience and long-suffering, together with judgment; judgments are joined with continuance of opportunity to seek mercy. But in hell there will be no more exercises of divine patience The judgments which God exercises on ungodly men in this world are warnings to them to avoid greater punishments; but the wrath which will come upon them, when they shall have filled up the measure of their sin, will not be of the nature of warnings. Indeed they will be effectually awakened, and made thoroughly sensible, by what they shall suffer; yet their being awakened and made

sensible will do them no good. Many a wicked man hath suffered very awful things from God in this world, which have been a means of saving good; but that wrath which sinners shall suffer after death will be no way for their good. God will have no merciful design in it; neither will it be possible that they should get any good by that or by any thing else.

3. Wrath will be so executed, as to perfect the work to which wrath tends, viz., *utterly to undo* the subject of it. Wrath is often so executed in this life, as greatly to distress persons, and bring them into great calamity; yet not so as to complete the ruin of those who suffer it; but in another world, it will be so executed, as to finish their destruction, and render them utterly and perfectly undone: it will take away all comfort, all hope, and all support. The soul will be, as it were, utterly crushed; the wrath will be wholly intolerable. It must sink, and will utterly sink, and will have no more strength to keep itself from sinking, than a worm would have to keep itself from being crushed under the weight of a mountain. The wrath will be so great, so mighty and powerful, as wholly to abolish all manner of welfare: Matt. xxi. 44, "But on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."

4. When persons shall have filled up the measure of their sin, that wrath will come upon them which is *eternal*. Though men may suffer very terrible and awful judgments in this world, yet those judgments have an end. They may be long continued, yet they commonly admit of relief. Temporal distresses and sorrows have intermissions and respite, and commonly by degrees abate and wear off; but the wrath that shall be executed, when the measure of sin shall have been filled up, will have no end. Thus it will be to the uttermost as to its duration; it will be of so long continuance, that it will be impossible it should be longer. Nothing can be longer than eternity.

5. When persons shall have filled up the measure of their sin, then wrath will come upon them to the uttermost of what is *threatened*. Sin is an infinite evil; and the punishment which God hath threatened against it is very dreadful. The threatenings of God against the workers of iniquity are very awful; but these threatenings are never fully accomplished in this world. However dreadful things some men may suffer in this life, yet God never fully executes his threatenings for so much as one sin, till they have filled up the whole measure. The threatenings of the law are never answered by any thing that any man suffers here. The most awful judgment in this life doth not answer God's threatenings, either in degree, or in circumstances, or in duration. If the greatest sufferings that ever are endured in this life should be eternal, it would not answer the threatening. Indeed temporal judgments *belong* to the threatenings of the law; but these are not *answered* by them; they are but foretastes of the punishment. "The wages of sin is death." No expressions of wrath that are suffered before men have filled up the measure of their sin, are its full wages. But *then*, God will reckon with them, and will recompense into their bosoms the full deserved sum.

APPLICATION.

The use I would make of this doctrine is, of warning to natural men, to rest no longer in sin, and to make haste to flee from it. The things which have been said, under this doctrine, may well be awakening, awful considerations to you. It is awful to consider whose wrath it is that abides upon you, and of what wrath you are in danger. It is impossible to express the misery of a natural condition It is like being in Sodom, with a dreadful storm of fire

and brimstone hanging over it, just ready to break forth, and to be poured down upon it. The clouds of divine vengeance are full, and just ready to burst Here let those who yet continue in sin, in this town, consider particularly,

1. Under what *great means* and advantages you continue in sin. God is now favoring us with very great and extraordinary means and advantages, in that we have such extraordinary tokens of the presence of God among us; his Spirit is so remarkably poured out, and multitudes of all ages, and all sorts, are converted and brought home to Christ. God appears among us in the most extraordinary manner, perhaps, that ever he did in New England. The children of Israel saw many mighty works of God, when he brought them out of Egypt; but we at this day see works more mighty, and of a more glorious nature.

We who live under such light, have had loud calls; but now above all. Now is a day of salvation. The fountain hath been set open among us in an extraordinary manner, and hath stood open for a considerable time: yet you continue in sin, and the calls that you have hitherto had have not brought you to be washed in it. What extraordinary advantages have you lately enjoyed, to stir you up! How hath every thing in the town, of late, been of that tendency! Those things which used to be the greatest hinderances have been removed. You have not the ill examples of immoral persons to be a temptation to you. There is not now that vain worldly talk, and ill company, to divert you, and to be a hinderance to you, which there used to be. Now you have multitudes of good examples set before you; there are many now all around you, who, instead of diverting and hindering you, are earnestly desirous of your salvation, and willing to do all that they can to move you to flee to Christ: they have a thirsting desire for it. The chief talk in the town has of late been about the things of religion, and has been such as hath tended to promote, and not to hinder, your souls' good. Every thing all around you hath tended to stir you up; and will you yet continue in sin?

Some of you have continued in sin till you are far advanced in life. You were warned when you were children; and some of you had awakenings then: however, the time went away. You became men and women; and then you were stirred up again, you had the strivings of God's Spirit; and some of you have fixed the times when you would make thorough work of seeking salvation Some of you perhaps determined to do it when you should be married and settled in the world; others when you should have finished such a business, and when your circumstances should be so and so altered. Now these times have come, and are past; yet you continue in sin.

Many of you have had remarkable warnings of Providence. Some of you have been warned by the deaths of near *relations*; you have stood by, and seen others die and go into eternity; yet this hath not been effectual. Some of you have been near death *yourselves*, have been brought nigh the grave in sore sickness, and were full of your promises how you would behave yourselves, if it should please God to spare your lives. Some of you have narrowly escaped death by dangerous accidents; but God was pleased to spare you, to give you a further space to repent; yet you continue in sin.

Some of you have seen times of remarkable outpourings of the Spirit of God, in this town, in times past; but it had no good effect on you. *You* had the strivings of the Spirit of God too, as well as others. God did not so pass by your door, but that he came and knocked; yet you stood it out Now God hath come again in a more remarkable manner than ever before, and hath been pouring out his Spirit for some months, in its most gracious influence; yet you

remain in sin until now. In the beginning of this awakening, you were warned to flee from wrath, and to forsake your sins. You were told what a wide door there was open, what an accepted time there was, and were urged to press into the kingdom of God. And many did press in; they forsook their sins, and believed in Christ; *but you, when you had seen it, repented not, that you might believe him.*

Then you were warned again, and still others have been pressing and thronging into the kingdom of God. Many have fled for refuge, and have laid hold on Christ; yet you continue in sin and unbelief. You have seen multitudes of all sorts, of all ages, young and old, flocking to Christ, and many of about your age and your circumstances; but you are still in the same miserable condition in which you used to be. You have seen persons daily flocking to Christ, as doves to their windows. God hath not only poured out his Spirit on this town, but also on other towns around us, and they are flocking in there, as well as here. This blessing spreads further and further; many, far and near, seem to be setting their faces Zionward: yet you who live here, where this work first began, continue behind still; you have no lot or portion in this matter.

2. How *dreadful* the wrath of God is, when it is executed to the uttermost! To make you in some measure sensible of that, I desire you to consider whose wrath it is. The wrath of a king is the roaring of a lion; but this is the wrath of Jehovah, the Lord God Omnipotent. Let us consider, what can we rationally think of it? How dreadful must be the wrath of such a Being, when it comes upon a person to the uttermost, without any pity, or moderation, or merciful circumstances! What must be the uttermost of his wrath, who made heaven and earth by the word of his power; who spake, and it was done, who commanded, and it stood fast! What must his wrath be, who commandeth the sun, and it rises not, and sealeth up the stars! What must his wrath be, who shaketh the earth out of its place, and causeth the pillars of heaven to tremble! What must his wrath be, who rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, who removeth the mountains out of their places, and overturneth them in his anger! What must his wrath be, whose majesty is so awful, that no man could live in the sight of it! What must the wrath of such a Being be, when it comes to the uttermost, when he makes his majesty appear and shine bright in the misery of wicked men! And what is a worm of the dust before the fury and under the weight of this wrath, which the stoutest devils cannot bear, but utterly sink, and are crushed under it!—Consider how dreadful the wrath of God is sometimes in this world, only in a little taste or view of it. Sometimes, when God only enlightens conscience, to have some sense of his wrath, it causes the stout-hearted to cry out; nature is ready to sink under it, when indeed it is but a little glimpse of divine wrath that is seen. This hath been observed in many cases. But if a slight taste and apprehension of wrath be so dreadful and intolerable, what must it be, when it comes upon persons to the uttermost! When a few drops or little sprinkling of wrath is so distressing and overbearing to the soul, how must it be when God opens the flood-gates, and lets the mighty deluge of his wrath come pouring down upon men's guilty heads, and brings in all his waves and billows upon their souls! How little of God's wrath will sink them! Psal. ii. 12, "When his wrath is kindled but a little, blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

3. Consider, you know not what wrath God may be about to execute upon wicked men in *this world.* Wrath may, in some sense, be coming upon them, in the present life, to the uttermost, for aught we know. When it is said of the

Jews, "The wrath is come upon them to the uttermost," respect is had, not only to the execution of divine wrath on that people in hell, but that terrible destruction of Judea and Jerusalem, which was then near approaching, by the Romans. We know not but the wrath is now coming, in some peculiarly awful manner, on the wicked world. God seems, by the things which he is doing among us, to be coming forth for some great thing. The work which hath been lately wrought among us is no ordinary thing. He doth not work in his usual way, but in a way very extraordinary; and it is probable, that it is a forerunner of some very great revolution. We must not pretend to say what is in the womb of Providence, or what is in the book of God's secret decrees; yet we may and ought to discern the signs of these times.

Though God be now about to do glorious things for his church and people, yet it is probable that they will be accompanied with dreadful things to his enemies. It is the manner of God, when he brings about any glorious revolution for his people, at the same time to execute very awful judgments on his enemies: Deut. xxxii. 43, "Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people." Isa. iii. 10, 11, "Say ye to the righteous, It shall be well with him: for they shall eat of the fruit of their doings. Wo unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him." Isa. lxv. 13, 14, "Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed; behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit." We find in Scripture, that where glorious times are prophesied to God's people, there are at the same time awful judgments foretold to his enemies. What God is now about to do, we know not: but this we may know, that there will be no safety to any but those who are in the ark.—Therefore it behooves all to haste and flee for their lives, to get into a safe condition, to get into Christ; then they need not fear, though the earth be removed, and the mountains carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled; though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof: for God will be their refuge and strength; they need not be afraid of evil tidings: their hearts may be fixed, trusting in the Lord.

SERMON XIII.

THE END OF THE WICKED CONTEMPLATED BY THE RIGHTEOUS: OR THE TORMENTS OF THE WICKED IN HELL, NO OCCASION OF GRIEF TO THE SAINTS IN HEAVEN.

REV. xviii. 20.—Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.

Introduction

IN this chapter we have a very particular account of the fall of Babylon, or the antichristian church, and of the vengeance of God executed upon her. Here it is proclaimed that Babylon the great is fallen, and become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird; that her sins had reached unto heaven, and that God had remembered her iniquity; that God gave commandment to reward her, as she had rewarded others, to double unto her double according to her works; in the cup she had filled, to fill to her double, and how much she had glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow to give her. And it is declared, that these plagues are come upon her in one day, death, mourning, and famine; and that she should be utterly burnt with fire; *because strong is the Lord who judgeth her.*

These things have respect partly to the overthrow of the antichristian church in this world, and partly to the vengeance of God upon her in the world to come. There is no necessity to suppose, that such extreme torments as are here mentioned will ever be executed upon papists, or upon the antichristian church, in this world. There will indeed be a dreadful and visible overthrow of that idolatrous church in this world. But we are not to understand the plagues here mentioned as exclusive of the vengeance which God will execute on the wicked upholders and promoters of antichristianism, and on the cruel antichristian persecutors, in another world.

This is evident by ver. 3, of the next chapter, where, with reference to the same destruction of antichrist which is spoken of in this chapter, it is said, "Her smoke rose up forever and ever;" in which words the eternal punishment of antichrist is evidently spoken of. Antichrist is here represented as being cast into hell, and there remaining forever after; he hath no place anywhere else but in hell. This is evident by ver. 20 of the next chapter, where, concerning the destruction of antichrist, it is said, "And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone."

Not but that the wicked antichristians have in all ages gone to hell as they died, and not merely at the fall of antichrist; but *then* the wrath of God against antichrist, of which damnation is the fruit, will be made eminently visible here on earth, by many remarkable tokens. Then antichrist will be confined to hell, and will have no more place here on earth; much after the same manner as the devil is said at the beginning of Christ's thousand years' reign on earth, to be cast into the bottomless pit, as you may see in the beginning of the twentieth chapter. Not but that he had his place in the bottomless pit before; he was cast down to hell when he fell at first: 2 Pet. ii. 4, "Cast

them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness." But now, when he shall be suffered to deceive the nations no more, his kingdom will be confined to hell.

In this text is contained part of what John heard uttered upon this occasion; and in these words we may observe,

1. To whom this voice is directed, viz., to *the holy prophets and apostles*, and the rest of the inhabitants of the heavenly world. When God shall pour out his wrath upon the antichristian church, it will be seen, and taken notice of, by all the inhabitants of heaven, even by holy prophets and apostles. Neither will they see as unconcerned spectators.

2. What they are called upon by the voice to do, viz., to *rejoice over Babylon* now destroyed, and lying under the wrath of God. They are not directed to rejoice over her in prosperity, but in flames, and beholding the smoke of her burning ascending up forever and ever.

3. A reason given: for *God hath avenged* YOU ON HER; i. e., God hath executed just vengeance upon her, for shedding your blood, and cruelly persecuting you. For thus the matter is represented, that antichrist had been guilty of shedding the blood of the holy prophets and apostles, as in chap. xvi. 6, "For they have shed the blood of saints and of prophets." And in ver. 24 of this context, "In her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all them that were slain on the earth." Not that antichrist had literally shed the blood of the prophets and apostles; but he had shed the blood of those who were their followers, who were of the same spirit, and of the same church, and same mystical body. The prophets and apostles in heaven are nearly related and united to the saints on earth; they live, as it were, in true Christians in all ages. So that by slaying these, persecutors show that they would slay the prophets and apostles, if they could; and they indeed do it as much as in them lies.

On the same account, Christ says of the Jews in his time, Luke xi. 50, "That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; from the blood of Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation." So Christ himself is said to have been crucified in the antichristian church, chap. xi. 8: "And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified." So all the inhabitants of heaven, all the saints from the beginning of the world, and the angels also, are called upon to rejoice over Babylon, because of God's vengeance upon her, wherein he avenges them: they all of them had in effect been injured and persecuted by antichrist. Indeed they are not called upon to rejoice in having their revenge glutted, but in seeing justice executed, and in seeing the love and tenderness of God towards them, manifested in his severity towards their enemies

SECTION I.

When the saints in glory shall see the wrath of God executed on ungodly men, it will be no occasion of grief to them, but of rejoicing.

It is not only the sight of God's wrath executed on those wicked men who are of the antichristian church, which will be occasion of rejoicing to the saints in glory; but also the sight of the destruction of all God's enemies: whether they have been the followers of antichrist or not, that alters not the case, if they have been the enemies of God, and of Jesus Christ. All wicked men will at last be destroyed together, as being united in the same cause and interest, as

being all of Satan's army. They will all stand together at the day of judgment, as being all of the same company.

And if we understand the text to have respect only to a temporal execution of God's wrath on his enemies, that will not alter the case. The thing they are called upon to rejoice at, is the execution of God's wrath upon his and their enemies. And if it be matter of rejoicing to them to see justice executed in part upon them, or to see the beginning of the execution of it in this world; for the same reason will they rejoice with greater joy, in beholding it fully executed. For the thing here mentioned as the foundation of their joy, is the execution of just vengeance: *Rejoice, for God hath avenged you on her.*

Prop. I. The glorified saints will see the wrath of God executed upon ungodly men. This the Scriptures plainly teach us, that the righteous and the wicked in the other world see each other's state. Thus the rich man in hell, and Lazarus and Abraham in heaven, are represented as seeing each other's opposite states, in the 16th chap. of Luke. The wicked in their misery will see the saints in the kingdom of heaven. Luke xiii. 28, 29, "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out."

So the saints in glory will see the misery of the wicked under the wrath of God. Isa. lxvi. 24, "And they shall go forth and look on the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched." And Rev. xiv. 9, 10, "If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture, into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb." The saints are not here mentioned, being included in Christ, as his members. The church is the fulness of Christ, and is called Christ, 1 Cor. xii. 12. So in the 19th chapter, ver. 2, 3, the smoke of Babylon's torment is represented as rising up forever and ever, in the sight of the heavenly inhabitants.

At the day of judgment, the saints in glory at Christ's right hand, will see the wicked at the left hand in their amazement and horror, will hear the judge pronounce sentence upon them, saying, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels;" and will see them go away into everlasting punishment. But the Scripture seems to hold forth to us, that the saints will not only see the misery of the wicked at the day of judgment, but the forementioned texts imply, that the state of the damned in hell will be in the view of the heavenly inhabitants; that the two worlds of happiness and misery will be in view of each other. Though we know not by what means, nor after what manner, it will be; yet the Scriptures certainly lead us to think, that they will some way or other have a direct and immediate apprehension of each other's state. The saints in glory will see how the damned are tormented; they will see God's threatenings fulfilled, and his wrath executed upon them.

Prop. II. When they shall see it, it will be no occasion of *grief* to them. The miseries of the damned in hell will be inconceivably great. When they shall come to bear the wrath of the Almighty poured out upon them without mixture, and executed upon them without pity or restraint, or any mitigation; it will doubtless cause anguish, and horror, and amazement vastly beyond all the sufferings and torments that ever any man endured in this world; yea, beyond all extent of our words or thoughts. For God in executing wrath upon ungodly men will act like an Almighty God. The Scripture calls this wrath, God's *fury*, and the *fierceness of his wrath*; and we are told that this is to show God's

wrath, and to make his power known; or to make known how dreadful his wrath is, and how great his power.

The saints in glory will see this, and be far more sensible of it than now we can possibly be. They will be far more sensible how dreadful the wrath of God is, and will better understand how terrible the sufferings of the damned are; yet this will be no occasion of grief to them. They will not be sorry for the damned; it will cause no uneasiness or dissatisfaction to them; but on the contrary, when they have this sight, it will excite them to joyful praises.—These two things are evidences of it:

1. That the seeing of the wrath of God executed upon the damned, should cause grief in the saints in glory, is inconsistent with that state of perfect happiness in which they are. There can no such thing as grief enter, to be an alloy to the happiness and joy of that world of blessedness. Grief is an utter stranger in that world. God hath promised that he will wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more sorrow. Rev. xxi. 4, and chap. vii. 17.

2. The saints in heaven possess all things as their own, and therefore all things contribute to their joy and happiness. The Scriptures teach that the saints in glory inherit all things. This God said in John's hearing, when he had the vision of the New Jerusalem, Rev. xxi. 7. And the Scriptures teach us to understand this absolutely of all the works of creation and providence. 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22, "All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours." Here the apostle teaches, that all things in the world to come, or in the future and eternal world, are the saints'; not only life, but death; men, and angels, and devils, heaven and hell, are theirs, to contribute to their joy and happiness. Therefore the damned and their misery, their sufferings and the wrath of God poured out upon them, will be an occasion of joy to them. If there were any thing whatsoever that did not contribute to their joy, but caused grief, then there would be something which would not be theirs.

That the torments of the damned are no matter of grief, but of joy, to the inhabitants of heaven, is very clearly expressed in several passages of this book of Revelation; particularly by chap. xvi. 5—7, and chap. xix. at the beginning.

SECTION II.

Why the sufferings of the wicked will not be cause of grief to the righteous, but the contrary.

1. Negatively; it will not be because the saints in heaven are the subjects of any ill disposition; but on the contrary, this rejoicing of theirs will be the fruit of an amiable and excellent disposition: it will be the fruit of a perfect holiness and conformity to Christ, the holy Lamb of God. The devil delights in the misery of men from cruelty, and from envy and revenge, and because he delights in misery, for its own sake, from a malicious disposition.

But it will be from exceedingly different principles, and for quite other reasons, that the just damnation of the wicked will be an occasion of rejoicing to the saints in glory. It will not be because they delight in seeing the misery of others absolutely considered. The damned suffering divine vengeance will be no occasion of joy to the saints merely as it is the misery of others, or because it is pleasant to them to behold the misery of others merely for its own sake. The rejoicing of the saints on this occasion is no argument, that they are not of a most amiable and excellent spirit, or that there is any

defect on that account, that there is any thing wanting, which would render them of a more amiable disposition. It is no argument that they have not a spirit of goodness and love reigning in them in absolute perfection, or that herein they do not excel the greatest instances of it on earth, as much as the stars are higher than the earth, or the sun brighter than a glowworm.

And whereas the heavenly inhabitants are in the text called upon to rejoice over Babylon, because God had avenged them on her; it is not to be understood, that they are to rejoice in having their revenge glutted, but to rejoice in seeing the justice of God executed, and in seeing his love to them in executing it on his enemies.

2. Positively; the sufferings of the damned will be no occasion of grief to the heavenly inhabitants, as they will have *no love nor pity* to the damned as such. It will be no argument of want of a spirit of love in them, that they do not love the damned; for the heavenly inhabitants will know that it is not fit that they should love them, because they will know then, that God has no love to them, nor pity for them; but that they are the objects of God's eternal hatred. And they will then be perfectly conformed to God in their wills and affections. They will love what God loves, and that only. However the saints in heaven may have loved the damned while here, especially those of them who were near and dear to them in this world, they will have no love to them hereafter.

It will be an occasion of their rejoicing, as the *glory of God* will appear in it. The glory of God appears in all his works: and therefore there is no work of God which the saints in glory shall behold and contemplate but what will be an occasion of rejoicing to them. God glorifies himself in the eternal damnation of the ungodly men. God glorifies himself in all that he doth; but he glorifies himself principally in his eternal disposal of his intelligent creatures: some are appointed to everlasting life, and others left to everlasting death.

The saints in heaven will be perfect in their love to God: their hearts will be all a flame of love to God, and therefore they will greatly value the glory of God, and will exceedingly delight in seeing him glorified. The saints highly value the glory of God here in this, but how much more will they so do in the world to come. They will therefore greatly rejoice in all that contributes to that glory. The glory of God will in their esteem be of greater consequence, than the welfare of thousands and millions of souls.—Particularly,

(1.) They will rejoice in seeing the *justice* of God glorified in the sufferings of the damned. The misery of the damned, dreadful as it is, is but what justice *requires*. They in heaven will see and know it much more clearly, than any of us do here. They will see how perfectly just and righteous their punishment is, and therefore how properly inflicted by the supreme Governor of the world. They will greatly rejoice to see justice take place, to see that all the sin and wickedness that have been committed in the world is remembered of God, and has its due punishment. The sight of this strict and immutable justice of God will render him amiable and adorable in their eyes. They will rejoice when they see him who is their Father and eternal portion so glorious in his justice.

Then there will be no remaining difficulties about the justice of God, about the absolute decrees of God, or any thing pertaining to the dispensations of God towards men. But divine justice in the destruction of the wicked will then appear as light without darkness, and will shine as the sun without clouds, and on this account will they sing joyful songs of praise to God, as we see the saints and angels do, when God pours the vials of his wrath upon antichrist

Rev. xvi. 5—7. They sing joyfully to God on this account, that true and righteous are his judgments, Rev. xix. 1—6. They seeing God so strictly just will make them value his love the more. Mercy and grace are more valuable on this account. The more they shall see of the justice of God the more will they prize and rejoice in his love.

(2.) They will rejoice in it, as it will be a glorious manifestation of the *power* and *majesty* of God. God will show his own greatness in executing vengeance on ungodly men. This is mentioned as one end of the destruction of the ungodly: "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?" God will hereby show how much he is above his enemies. There are many now in the world, who proudly lift up themselves against God. There are many open opposers of the cause and interest of Christ. "They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth." Then God will show his glorious power in destroying these enemies.

The power of God is sometimes spoken of as very glorious, as appearing in the temporal destruction of his enemies: Exod. xv. 6, "Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power; thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy." But how much more glorious will it appear in his triumphing over, and dashing in pieces at once, all his enemies, wicked men and devils together, all his haughty foes! The power of God will gloriously appear in dashing to pieces his enemies as a potter's vessel. Moses rejoiced and sang when he saw God glorify his power in the destruction of Pharaoh and his host at the Red Sea. But how much more will the saints in glory rejoice, when they shall see God gloriously triumphing over all his enemies in their eternal ruin! Then it will appear how dreadful God is, and how dreadful a thing it is to disobey and contemn him. It is often mentioned as a part of the glory of God, that he is a terrible God. To see the majesty, and greatness, and terribleness of God, appearing in the destruction of his enemies, will cause the saints to rejoice; and when they shall see how great and terrible a being God is, how will they prize his favor! How will they rejoice that they are the objects of his love! How will they praise him the more joyfully, that he should choose them to be his children, and to live in the enjoyment of him!

It will occasion rejoicing in them, as they will have the greater sense of *their own happiness*, by seeing the contrary misery. It is the nature of pleasure and pain, of happiness and misery, greatly to heighten the sense of each other. Thus the seeing of the happiness of others tends to make men more sensible of their own calamities; and the seeing of the calamities of others tends to heighten the sense of our own enjoyments.

When the saints in glory, therefore, shall see the doleful state of the damned, how will this heighten their sense of the blessedness of their own state, so exceedingly different from it! When they shall see how miserable others of their fellow-creatures are, who were naturally in the same circumstances with themselves; when they shall see the smoke of their torment, and the raging of the flames of their burning, and hear their dolorous shrieks and cries, and consider that they in the mean time are in the most blissful state, and shall surely be in it to all eternity; how will they rejoice!

This will give them a joyful sense of the *grace and love of God to them*, because hereby they will see how great a benefit they have by it. When they shall see the dreadful miseries of the damned, and consider that they deserved the same misery, and that it was *sovereign grace*, and nothing else, which made them so much to differ from the damned, that, if it had not been for that, they

would have been in the same condition; but that God from all eternity was pleased to set his love upon them, that Christ hath laid down his life for them, and hath made them thus gloriously happy forever, O how will they admire that dying love of Christ, which has redeemed them from so great a misery, and purchased for them so great happiness, and has so distinguished them from others of their fellow-creatures! How joyfully will they sing to God and the Lamb, when they behold this!

SECTION III.

An objection answered.

The objection is, "If we are apprehensive of the damnation of others now, it in no wise becomes us to rejoice at it, but to lament it. If we see others in imminent danger of going to hell, it is accounted a very sorrowful thing, and it is looked upon as an argument of a senseless and wicked spirit, to look upon it otherwise. When it is a very dead time with respect to religion, and a very degenerate and corrupt time among a people, it is accounted a thing greatly to be lamented; and on this account, that at such times there are but few converted and saved, and many perish. Paul tells us, that he had great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart, because so many of the Jews were in a perishing state: Rom. ix. 1, 2, 3, "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." And if a neighbor die, and his death be attended with circumstances which look darkly as to the state of his soul, we account it a sorrowful thing, because he has left us no more comfortable grounds to hope for his salvation. Why is it not then an unbecoming thing in the saints in glory to rejoice when they see the damnation of the ungodly?

Ans. 1. It is now our duty to love all men, though they are wicked; but it will not be a duty to love wicked men hereafter. Christ, by many precepts in his word, hath made it our duty to love all men. We are commanded to love wicked men, and our enemies and persecutors. But this command doth not extend to the saints in glory, with respect to the damned in hell. Nor is there the same reason that it should. We ought now to love all, and even wicked men; we know not but that God loves them. However wicked any man is, yet we know not but that he is one whom God loved from eternity, we know not but that Christ loved him with a dying love, had his name upon his heart before the world was, and had respect to him when he endured those bitter agonies on the cross. We know not but that he is to be our companion in glory to all eternity.

But this is not the case in another world. The saints in glory will know concerning the damned in hell, that God never loved them, but that he hates them, and will be forever hated of God. This hatred of God will be fully declared to them; they will see it, and will see the fruits of it in their misery. Therefore, when God has thus declared his hatred of the damned, and the saints see it, it will be no way becoming in the saints to love them, nor to mourn over them. It becomes the saints fully and perfectly to consent to what God doth, without any reluctance or opposition of spirit; yea, it becomes them to rejoice in every thing that God sees meet to be done.

Ans. 2. We ought now to seek and be concerned for the salvation of wicked men, because now they are capable subjects of it. Wicked men, though

they may be very wicked, yet are capable subjects of mercy. It is yet a day of grace with them, and they have the offers of salvation. Christ is as yet seeking their salvation; he is calling upon them, inviting and wooing them, he stands at the door and knocks. He is using many means with them, is calling them, saying, *Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?* The day of his patience is yet continued to them; and if Christ is seeking their salvation, surely we ought to seek it.

God is wont now to make men the means of one another's salvation; yea, it is his ordinary way so to do. He makes the concern and endeavors of his people the means of bringing home many to Christ. Therefore they ought to be concerned for and endeavor it. But it will not be so in another world: there wicked men will be no longer capable subjects of mercy. The saints will know, that it is the will of God the wicked should be miserable to all eternity. It will therefore cease to be their duty any more to seek their salvation, or to be concerned about their misery. On the other hand, it will be their duty to rejoice in the will and glory of God. It is not our duty to be sorry that God hath executed just vengeance on the devils, concerning whom the will of God in their eternal state is already known to us.

Ans. 3. Rejoicing at the calamities of others now, rests not on the same grounds as that of the saints in glory. The evil of rejoicing at others' calamities now, consists in our envy, or revenge, or some such disposition is gratified therein: and not that God is glorified, that the majesty and justice of God gloriously shine forth.

Ans. 4. The different circumstances of our nature now, from what will be hereafter, make that a virtue now which will be no virtue then. For instance, if a man be of a virtuous disposition, the circumstances of our nature now are such, that it will necessarily show itself by natural affection, and to be without natural affection is a very vicious disposition; and is so mentioned in Rom. i. 31. But natural affection is no virtue in the saints in glory. Their virtue will exercise itself in a higher manner.

Ans. 5. The vengeance inflicted on many of the wicked will be a manifestation of God's love to the saints. One way whereby God shows his love to the saints, is by destroying their enemies. God hath said, "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of mine eye." And it is often mentioned in Scripture, as an instance of the great love of God to his people, that his wrath is so awakened, when they are wronged and injured. Thus Christ hath promised that God will avenge his own elect, Luke xviii. 7, and hath said, that "if any man offend one of his little ones, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea," Matt. xviii. 6.

So the saints in glory will see the great love of God to them, in the dreadful vengeance which he shall inflict on those who have injured and persecuted them; and the view of this love of God to them will be just cause of their rejoicing. Thus, in the text, heaven and the holy apostles and prophets are called to rejoice over their enemies, because God hath avenged them of them.

SECTION IV.

The ungodly warned.

I shall apply this subject only in one use, viz., of *warning* to ungodly men. And in order to this, I desire such to consider,

1. How destitute of any comforting consideration your condition will be, if you perish at last. You will have none to pity you. Look which way you

will, before or behind, on the right hand or left, look up to heaven, or look about you in hell, and you will see none to condole your case, or to exercise any pity towards you, in your dreadful condition. You must bear these flames, you must bear that torment and amazement, day and night, forever, and never have the comfort of considering, that there is so much as one that pities your case; there never will one tear be dropped for you.

(1.) You have now been taught that you will have no pity from the *created inhabitants* of heaven. If you shall look to them, you will see them all rejoicing at the sight of the glory of God's justice, power, and terrible majesty, manifested in your torment. You will see them in a blissful and glorious state; you will see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God; you will see many come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and sit down in that glorious kingdom; and will see them all with one voice, and with united joy, praising God for glorifying himself in your destruction. You will wail and gnash your teeth under your own torments, and with envy of their happiness; but they will rejoice and sing: Isa. lxv. 13, 14, "Therefore thus saith the Lord, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed: behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit."

(2.) God will exercise no pity towards you. If you might have his pity in any degree, that would be of more worth to you than thousands of worlds. That would make your case to be not without comfort and hope. But God will exercise no pity towards you. He hath often said concerning wicked men, that his eye shall not spare, neither will he have pity, Ezek. v. 11, and vii. 4, 9, and viii. 18. He will cast upon you, and not spare; you will see nothing in God, and receive nothing from him, but perfect hatred, and the fierceness of his wrath; nothing but the mighty falls or outpourings of wrath upon you every moment; and no cries will avail to move God to any pity, or in the least to move him to lighten his hand, or assuage the fierceness and abate the power of your torments.

Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, will have no pity on you. Though he had so much love to sinners, as to be willing to lay down his life for them, and offers you the benefits of his blood, while you are in this world, and often calls upon you to accept them; yet then he will have no pity upon you. You never will hear any more instructions from him; he will utterly refuse to be your instructor: on the contrary, he will be your judge, to pronounce sentence against you.

3. You will find none that will pity you in hell. The devils will not pity you, but will be your tormentors, as roaring lions or hell-hounds to tear you in pieces continually. And other wicked men who shall be there will be like devils; they will have no pity on you, but will hate, and curse, and torment you. And you yourselves will be like devils; you will be like devils to yourselves, and will be your own tormentors.

2. Consider what an aggravation what you have heard under this doctrine will be to your misery. Consider how it will be at the day of judgment, when you shall see Christ coming in the clouds of heaven, when you shall begin to wail and cry, as knowing that you are those who are to be condemned; and perhaps you will be ready to fly to some of your godly friends; but you will obtain no help from them: you will see them unconcerned for you, with joyful countenances ascending to meet the Lord, and not the less joyful for the horror in which they see you. And when you shall stand before the tribunal at the left hand, among devils, trembling and astonished, and shall have the dreadful

sentence passed upon you, you will at the same time see the blessed company of saints and angels at the right hand rejoicing, and shall hear them shout forth the praises of God, while they hear your sentence pronounced. You will then see those godly people, with whom you shall have been acquainted, and who shall have been your neighbors, and with whom you now often converse, rejoicing at the pronunciation and execution of your sentence.

Perhaps there are now some godly people, to whom you are near and dear, who are tenderly concerned for you, are ready to pity you under all calamities, and willing to help you; and particularly are tenderly concerned for your poor soul, and have put up many fervent prayers for you. How will you bear to hear these singing for joy of heart, while you are crying for sorrow of heart, and howling for vexation of spirit, and even singing the more joyful for the glorious justice of God which they behold in your eternal condemnation!

You that have godly parents, who in this world have tenderly loved you, who were wont to look upon your welfare as their own, and were wont to be grieved for you when any thing calamitous befell you in this world, and especially were greatly concerned for the good of your souls, industriously sought, and earnestly prayed for their salvation; how will you bear to see them in the kingdom of God, crowned with glory? Or how will you bear to see them receiving the blessed sentence, and going up with shouts and songs, to enter with Christ into the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world, while you are amongst a company of devils, and are turned away with the most bitter cries, to enter into everlasting burnings, prepared for the devil and his angels? How will you bear to see your parents, who in this life had so dear an affection for you, now without any love to you, approving the sentence of condemnation, when Christ shall with indignation bid you depart, wretched, cursed creatures, into eternal burnings? How will you bear to see and hear them praising the Judge, for his justice exercised in pronouncing this sentence, and hearing it with holy joy in their countenances, and shouting forth the praises and hallelujahs of God and Christ on that account?

When they shall see what manifestations of amazement there will be in you, at the hearing of this dreadful sentence, and that every syllable of it pierces you like a thunderbolt, and sinks you into the lowest depths of horror and despair; when they shall behold you with a frighted, amazed countenance, trembling and astonished, and shall hear you groan and gnash your teeth; these things will not move them at all to pity you, but you will see them with a holy joyfulness in their countenances, and with songs in their mouths. When they shall see you turned away and beginning to enter into the great furnace, and shall see how you shrink at it, and hear how you shriek and cry out; yet they will not be at all grieved for you, but at the same time you will hear from them renewed praises and hallelujahs for the true and righteous judgments of God, in so dealing with you.

Then you will doubtless remember how those your glorified parents seemed to be concerned for your salvation, while you were here in this world; you will remember how they were wont to counsel and warn you, and how little you regarded their counsels, and how they seemed to be concerned and grieved, that there appeared no more effect of their endeavors for the good of your souls. You will then see them praising God for executing just vengeance on you, for setting so light by their counsels and reproofs. However here they loved you, and were concerned for you, now they will rise up in judgment against you, and will declare how your sins are aggravated by the endeavors which they to no purpose used with you, to bring you to forsake sin and practise virtue, and

to seek and serve God; but you were obstinate under all, and would not hearken to them. They will declare how inexcusable you are upon this account. And when the Judge shall execute the more terrible wrath upon you on this account, that you have made no better improvement of your parents' instructions, they will joyfully praise God for it. After they shall have seen you lie in hell thousands of years, and your torment shall yet continue without any rest, day or night; they will not begin to pity you then; they will praise God, that his justice appears in the eternity of your misery.

You that have godly husbands, or wives, or brethren, or sisters, with whom you have been wont to dwell under the same roof, and to eat at the same table, consider how it will be with you, when you shall come to part with them; when they shall be taken and you left: Luke xvii. 34, 35, 36, "I tell you, in that night, there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken and the other left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken and the other left." However you may wail and lament, when you see them parted from you, they being taken and you left, you will see in them no signs of sorrow, that you are not taken with them; that you ascend not with them to meet the Lord in the air, but are left below to be consumed with the world, which is reserved unto fire, against the day of the perdition of ungodly men.

Those wicked men, who shall go to hell from under the labors of pious and faithful ministers, will see those ministers rejoicing and praising God upon the occasion of their destruction. Consider, ye that have long lived under Mr. Stoddard's ministry,* and are yet in a natural condition, how dreadful it will be to you to see him who was so tenderly concerned for the good of your souls while he was here, and so earnestly sought your salvation, to see him rising up in judgment against you, declaring your inexcusableness, declaring how often he warned you; how plainly he set your danger before you, and told you of the opportunity that you had; how fully he set forth the miserable condition in which you were, and the necessity there was that you should obtain an interest in Christ; how movingly and earnestly he exhorted you to get into a bette state, and how regardless you were; how little you minded all that he said tc you; how you went on still in your trespasses, hardened your necks, and made your hearts as an adamant, and refused to return! How dreadful will it be to you to hear him declaring how inexcusable you are upon these accounts! How will you be cut to the heart, when you shall see him approving the sentence of condemnation, which the Judge shall pronounce against you, and judging and sentencing you with Christ, as an assessor in judgment; for the saints shall judge the world (1 Cor. vi. 2); and when you shall see him rejoicing in the execution of justice upon you for all your unprofitableness under his ministry!

3. Consider what a happy opportunity you have in your hands now. Now your case is very different from the case of wicked men in another world, of which you have now heard; and particularly in the following respects.

(1.) God makes it the duty of *all the godly* now to be concerned for your salvation. As to those who are damned in hell, the saints in glory are not concerned for their welfare, and have no love nor pity towards them; and if you perish hereafter, it will be an occasion of joy to all the godly. But now God makes it the duty of all the godly, to love you with a sincere good-will and earnest affection. God doth not excuse men from loving you, for your ill qualities: though you are wicked and undeserving, yet God makes it the duty of

* The author's grandfather and predecessor.

all sincerely to wish well to you; and it is a heinous sin in the sight of God for any to hate you. He requires all to be concerned for your salvation, and by all means to seek it. It is their duty now to lament your danger, and to pray for mercy to you, that you may be converted and brought home to Christ.

Now the godly who know you, desire your salvation, and are ready to seek, and pray for it. If you be now in distress about the condition of your souls, you are not in such a forsaken, helpless condition, as those that are damned; but you may find many to pray for you, many who are willing to assist you by their advice and counsels, and all with a tender concern, and with hearty wishes that your souls may prosper. Now some of you have godly friends who are near and dear to you; you are beloved of those who have a great interest in heaven, and who have power with God by their prayers: you have the blessing of living under the same roof with them. Some of you have godly parents to pray for you, and to counsel and instruct you, who you may be sure will do it with sincere love and concern for you. And there is not only the command of God, God hath not only made it the duty of others to seek your salvation, but hath given encouragement to others to seek it. He gives encouragement that they may obtain help for you by their prayers, and that they may be instrumental of your spiritual good. God reveals it to be his manner, to make our sincere endeavors a means of each other's good. How different is the case with you from what it is with those that are already damned! And how happy an opportunity have you in your hands, if you would but improve it!

(2.) Now you live where there is *a certain order of men* appointed to make it the business of their lives to seek your salvation. Now you have ministers, not to rise up in judgment against you; but in Christ's stead, to beseech you to be reconciled to God, 2 Cor. v. 20. God hath not only made it the duty of all to wish well to your souls, and occasionally to endeavor to promote your spiritual interests, but he hath set apart certain persons, to make it their whole work, in which they should spend their days and their strength.

(3.) *Christ himself* is now seeking your salvation. He seeks it by the forementioned means, by appointing men to make it their business to seek it; he seeks it by them; they are his instruments, and they beseech you in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God. He seeks it in commanding your neighbors to seek it. Christ is represented in Scripture, as wooing the souls of sinners. He uses means to persuade them to choose and accept of their own salvation. He often invites them to come to him that they may have life, that they may find rest to their souls; to come and take of the water of life freely. He stands at the door and knocks; and ceases not, though sinners for a long time refuse him. He bears repeated repulses from them, and yet mercifully continues knocking, saying, "Open to me, that I may come in and sup with you, and you with me." At the doors of many sinners he stands thus knocking for many years together. Christ is become a most importunate suitor to sinners, that he may become their sovereign. He is often setting before them the need they have of him, the miserable condition in which they are, and the great provision that is made for the good of their souls; and he invites them to accept of this provision, and promises it shall be theirs upon their mere acceptance.

Thus how earnestly did Christ seek the salvation of Jerusalem, and he wept over it when they refused: Luke xix. 41, 42, "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." And Matt. xxiii. 37, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would

I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Thus Christ is now seeking your salvation; such an opportunity have you now in your hands. Consider therefore how many means Christ is using with you, to bring you to salvation.

Besides those things which have been now mentioned, some of you have a degree of the inward strivings and influences of the Spirit, which makes your opportunity much greater. You have Christ's internal calls and knockings. All the persons of the Trinity are now seeking your salvation. God the Father hath sent his Son, who hath made way for your salvation, and removed all difficulties, except those which are with your own heart. And he is waiting to be gracious to you; the door of his mercy stands open to you; he hath set a fountain open for you to wash in from sin and uncleanness. Christ is calling, inviting, and wooing you; and the Holy Ghost is striving with you by his internal motions and influences.

4. If you now repent, before it be too late, the *saints and angels* in glory will rejoice at your repentance. If you repent not till it is too late, they will, as you have heard, rejoice in seeing justice executed upon you. But if you now repent, they will rejoice at your welfare, that you who were lost, are found; that you who were dead, are alive again. They will rejoice that you are come to so happy a state already, and that you are in due time to inherit eternal happiness, Luke xv. 3—10. So that if now you will improve your opportunity, there will be a very different occasion of joy in heaven concerning you, than that of which the doctrine speaks; not a rejoicing on occasion of your misery, but on occasion of your unspeakable blessedness.

5. If you repent before it is too late, *you yourselves* shall be of that joyful company. They will be so far from rejoicing on occasion of your ruin, that you yourselves will be of that glorious company, who will rejoice in all the works of God, who will have all tears wiped away from their eyes, to whom there will be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, and from whom sorrow and sighing shall flee away. You yourselves will be of those who will rejoice at the glorious display of God's majesty and justice in his wrath on his enemies. You will be of those that shall sing for joy of heart at the day of judgment, while others mourn for sorrow of heart, and howl for vexation of spirit; and you will enter into the joy of your Lord, and there shall *never be any end or abatement of your joy!*

SERMON XIV

WICKED MEN USEFUL IN THEIR DESTRUCTION ONLY

EZEKIEL xv. 2, 3, 4.—Son of man, What is the vine-tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest? Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? or will men take a pin of it to hang any vessel thereon? Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel; the fire devoureth both the ends of it, and the midst of it is burnt. Is it meet for any work?

THE visible church of God is here compared to the vine-tree, as is evident by God's own explanation of the allegory, in verses 6, 7, and 8: "Therefore thus saith the Lord God, As the vine-tree among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so will I give the inhabitants of Jerusalem," &c. And it may be understood of mankind in general. We find man often in Scripture compared to a vine. So in chapter 32, of Deuteronomy, "Their vine is the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah. Their grapes are grapes of gall." And Psal, lxxx. 8, "Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt;" ver. 14, "Look down from heaven, behold, and visit this vine." And Cant. ii. 15, "The foxes that spoil the vines; for our vines have tender grapes." Isaiah v. at the beginning, "My beloved hath a vineyard, and he planted it with the choicest vine." Jer. ii. 21, "I had planted thee a noble vine." Hos. x. 1, "Israel is an empty vine." So, in chap. 15 of John, visible Christians are compared to the *branches of a vine.*

Man is very fitly represented by the vine. The weakness and dependence of the vine on other things which support it, well represents to us what a poor, feeble, dependent creature man is, and how, if left to himself, he must fall into mischief, and cannot help himself. The visible people of God are fitly compared to a vine, because of the care and cultivation of the husbandman, or vine-dresser. The business of husbandmen in the land of Israel, was very much in their vineyards, about vines; and the care they exercised to fence them, to defend them, to prune them, to prop them up, and to cultivate them, well represented that merciful care which God exercises towards his visible people; and this latter is often in Scripture expressly compared to the former.

In the words now read is represented,

1. How wholly useless and unprofitable, even beyond other trees, a vine is, in case of unfruitfulness: "What is a vine-tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest?" i. e., if it do not bear fruit. Men make much more of a vine than of other trees; they take great care of it, to wall it in, to dig about it, to prune it, and the like. It is much more highly esteemed than any of the trees of the forest; they are despised in comparison with it. And if it bear fruit, it is indeed much preferable to other trees; for the fruit of it yields a noble liquor; as it is said in Jotham's parable, Judg. ix. 13, "And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man?"

But if it bear no fruit, it is more unprofitable than the trees of the forest; for the wood of them is good for timber; but the wood of the vine is fit for no work; as in the text, "Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? Or will men take a pin of it to hang any vessel thereon?"

2. The only thing for which a vine is useful, in case of barrenness, viz., for fuel: "Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel." It is wholly consumed; no part of it is worth a saving, to make any instrument of it, for any work.

DOCTRINE.

If men bring forth no fruit to God, they are wholly useless, unless in their destruction.

For the proof of this doctrine, I shall show,

1. That it is very evident, that there can be but two ways in which man can be useful, viz., either in *acting*, or in *being acted upon*, and *disposed of*.

2. The man can no otherwise be useful actively than by bringing forth fruit to God.

3. That if he bring not forth fruit to God, there is no other way in which he can be passively useful, but in being destroyed.

4. In that way he may be useful without bearing fruit.

I. There are but two ways in which man can be useful, viz., either in acting or being acted upon. If man be a useful sort of creature, he must be so either actively or passively: there is no medium. If he be useful to any purpose, he must be so either in acting himself, or else in being disposed of by some other; either in doing something himself to that purpose, or else in having something done upon him by some other to that purpose. What can be more plain, than that if man do nothing himself, and nothing be done with him or upon him by any other, he cannot be any way at all useful?

If man do nothing himself to promote the end of his existence, and no other being do any thing with him to promote this end, then nothing will be done to promote this end; and so man must be wholly useless. So that there are but two ways in which man can be useful to any purpose, viz., either actively or passively, either in doing something himself, or in being the subject of something done to him.

II. Man cannot be useful actively, any otherwise than in bringing forth fruit to God, than in serving God, and living to his glory. This is the only way wherein he can be useful in doing; and that for this reason, that the glory of God is the very thing for which man was made, and to which all other ends are subordinate. Man is not an independent being, but he derives his being from another; and therefore hath his end assigned him by that other: and he that gave him his being, made him for the end now mentioned. This was the very design and aim of the Author of man, this was the work for which he made him, viz., to serve and glorify his Maker.

Other creatures are made for inferior purposes. Inferior creatures were made for inferior purposes. But it is to be observed, that man is the creature that is highest, and nearest to God, of any in this lower world; and therefore his business is with God, although other creatures are made for lower ends. There may be observed a kind of gradation, or gradual ascent, in the order of the different kinds of creatures, from the meanest clod of earth to man, who hath a rational and immortal soul. A plant, an herb, or tree, is superior in nature to a stone or clod, because it hath a vegetable life. The brute creatures are a degree higher still; for they have sensitive life. But man, having a rational soul, is the highest of this lower creation, and is next to God; therefore his business is with God.

Things without life, as earth, water, &c., are subservient to things above them, as the grass, herbs, and trees. These vegetables are subservient to that order of creatures which is next above them, the brute creation; they are for food to them. Brute creatures, again, are made for the use and service of the order above them; they are made for the service of mankind. But man being the highest of this lower creation, the next step from him is to God. He there-

fore is made for the service and glory of God. This is the whole work and business of man; it is his highest end, to which all other ends are subordinate.

If it had not been for this end, there never would have been any such sort of creature as man; there would have been no occasion for it. Other inferior ends may be answered as well, without any such creature as man. There would have been no sort of occasion for making so noble a creature, and endowing him with such faculties, only to enjoy earthly good, to eat, and to drink, and to enjoy sensual things. Brute creatures, without reason, are capable of these things, as well as man: yea, if no higher end be aimed at than to enjoy sensitive good, reason is rather a hinderance than a help. It doth but render man the more capable of afflicting himself with care, and fears of death, and other future evils, and of vexing himself with many anxieties, from which brute creatures are wholly free, and therefore can gratify their senses with less molestation. Besides, reason doth but make men more capable of molesting and impeding one another in the gratification of their senses. If man have no other end to seek but to gratify his senses, reason is nothing but an impediment.

Therefore if man be not made to serve and glorify his Creator, it is wholly to no purpose that such a creature is made. Doubtless then the all-wise God, who doth all things in infinite wisdom, hath made man for this end. And this is agreeable to what he hath taught us in many places in the Scriptures. This is the great end for which man was made, and for which he was made such a creature as he is, having a body and soul, bodily senses and rational powers. For this is he placed in such circumstances as he is, and the earth is given him for a possession. For this he hath dominion given him over the rest of the creatures of this world. For this the sun shines on him, and the moon and stars are for signs and seasons to him, and the rain falls on him, and the earth yields him her increase.

All other ends of man are subordinate to this. There are inferior ends for which man was made. Men were made for one another; made for their friends and neighbors, and for the good of the public. But all these inferior ends are designed to be subordinate to the higher end of glorifying God; and therefore man cannot be actively useful, or actively answer any purpose, otherwise than by actively glorifying God, or bringing forth fruit to God. Because,

1. That is not actively useful which doth not actively answer its end: that which doth not answer its end is in vain; for that is the meaning of the proposition, that any thing is in vain. So that which doth not actively answer its end, is, as to its own activity, in vain.

2. That is as to its own activity altogether useless which actively answers only subordinate ends, without answering the ultimate end; and that because the ultimate end is the end of subordinate ends. The notion of a supreme end is, that it is the end of all inferior ends. Subordinate ends are to no purpose, only as they stand related to the highest end. The very notion of a subordinate end is, that it is in order to a further end. Therefore these inferior ends are good for nothing though they be obtained, unless they also obtain their end. Inferior ends are not aimed at for their own sake, but only for the sake of the ultimate end. Therefore he that fails of his great end of all, doth as much altogether fail of his end, and is as much to no purpose, as if he did not obtain his subordinate end.

I will illustrate this by two or three examples. The subordinate end of the underpinning of a house is to support the house; and the subordinate end of the windows is to let in the light. But the ultimate end of the whole is the benefit of the inhabitants. Therefore, if the house be never inhabited, the whole is in

vain. The underpinning is in vain, though it be ever so strong and support the building ever so well. The windows also are wholly in vain, though they be ever so large and clear, and though they obtain the subordinate end of letting in the light: they are as much in vain as if they let in no light.

So the subordinate end of the husbandman in ploughing and sowing, and well manuring his field is, that it may bring forth a crop. But his more ultimate end is, that food may be provided for him and his family. Therefore though his inferior end be obtained, and his field bring forth ever so good a crop, yet if after all it be consumed by fire, or otherwise destroyed, he ploughed and sowed his field as much in vain, as if the seed had never sprung up.

So if a man obtain his subordinate ends ever so fully; yet if he altogether fail of his ultimate end, he is wholly a useless creature. Thus if men be very useful in temporal things to their families, or greatly promote the temporal interest of the neighborhood, or of the public; yet if no glory be brought to God by it, they are altogether useless. If men actively bring no glory to God, they are, as to their own activity, altogether useless, how much soever they may promote the benefit of one another. How much soever one part of mankind may subserve another; yet if the end of the whole be not answered, every part is useless.

Thus if the parts of a clock subserve ever so well one to another, mutually to assist each other in their motions; one wheel moving another ever so regularly; yet if the motion never reach the hand or the hammer, it is altogether in vain, as much as if it stood still. As in a clock one wheel moves another, and that another, till at last the motion comes to the hand and hammer, which immediately respect the eye and the ear, otherwise all the motions are in vain, so it is in the world; one man was made to be useful to another, and one part of mankind to another; but the use of the whole is to bring glory to God the maker, or else all is in vain; and however a man may serve among his fellow creatures, in a private or public capacity, upon the whole he is in vain.

It may perhaps be objected, that a wicked man may, by being serviceable to the public, be useful to many who do bring forth fruit to God, and thus glorify him.

Answer 1. If he be so, he is no further useful than he brings glory to God. It all hath an ultimate respect to that glory that is brought to God, and is useful no further; as the motion of no one wheel of a clock is any further useful, than as it finally respects the right pointing of the hand, and striking of the hammer.

Answer 2. When it is thus, wicked men are useful only accidentally, and not designedly. Although a wicked man may, by being serviceable to good men, do what will be an advantage to them to their bringing forth fruit to God; yet that serviceableness is not what he aims at; this is not his end; he doth not look so far for an ultimate end. And however this end be obtained, no thanks are due to him; it is as to him accidental. He is only the occasion, and not the designing cause of it. That fruit which is brought forth to the glory of God, is not brought forth by him, but by others.

The usefulness of such a man, being not designed, is not to be attributed to him as though it were his fruit. He is not useful *as a man*, or as a rational creature, because he is not so designedly. He is useful as things without life may be. Things without life may be useful to put the godly under advantages to bring forth fruit, as the timber and stones with which his house is built, the wool and flax with which he is clothed; but the fruit which is brought forth to God's glory, cannot be said for all that to be the fruit of these lifeless things, but of the godly man who makes use of them. So it is when wicked men put the

godly under advantages to glorify God, as Cyrus, and Artaxerxes, and others have done.

III. If men bring not forth fruit to God, there is no other way in which they can be useful passively, but in being destroyed. They are fit for nothing else.

1. They are not fit to be suffered to continue always in this world. God suffers them to live for the present, but it is only for a certain season. They are here in a transitory state. It is not fit that this world should be the constant abode of those who bring forth no fruit to God. It is not fit that the barren tree should be allowed always to stand in the vineyard. The husbandman lets it stand for a while, till he digs about it, dungs it, and proves it to be incurable, or till a convenient time to cut it down come; but it is not fit that such a tree should stand here always. It is not fit that they who bring forth no fruit to God, should be suffered to live always in a world which is so full of the goodness of God, or that his goodness should be spent upon them forever.

This world, though it is fallen, and is under a curse, and is a miserable place to what it once was, yet is full of the streams of divine goodness. Bu. it is not fit that those who bring forth no fruit to God, should always be continued in partaking of these streams. There are these three different states; a state wherein is nothing but good, which is the state of the blessed in heaven; a state wherein is a mixture of good and evil, which is the earthly state; and a state wherein is nothing but evil, which is the state of eternal destruction and damnation. Now they that bring forth no fruit to God, are not fit for either of the former; it is not fit that they should be continued in the enjoyment of any of the goodness of God.

It is not fit that an unprofitable, unfruitful creature, who will not glorify his Creator, should always live here to devour the fruits of the earth, and consume the fruits of divine bounty; to have the good things of this life, as God's wool and his flax, his corn, and wine, and oil, spent with him in vain. While a man lives in this world, the other creatures of the world are subjected to him. The brute creatures serve him with their labor and with their lives. The sun, moon and stars, the clouds, fields and trees, all serve him. But it is not fit that these creatures should always be made to serve him, who brings forth no fruit to the Creator. Why should God always keep his creatures in subjection to that man, who will not be subject to *him?* Why should the creation be always kept in such bondage, as to be subject to wicked men? The creatures are made subject to vanity for a little time; God hath subjected them to wicked men, and given them for their use. This however he would not have done, but as it is only for a little while; and the creatures can bear it through the hope of approaching deliverance; and otherwise it would have been intolerable. Rom. viii. 20, "For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope."

The creature doth, as it were, groan by reason of this subjection to wicked men, although it be but for a while. Rom. viii. 22, "For we know that the whole creation groaneth, and travaileth in pain together until now." Therefore surely it would be no way fit that wicked men, who do no good, and bring forth no fruit to God, should live here always, to have the various creatures subservient to them, as they are now. The earth can scarcely bear wicked men during that short time for which they stay here, but is ready to spew them out. It is no way fit, therefore, that it should be forced to bear them always.

Men who bring forth no fruit to God are cumberers of the ground. Luke xiii. 7, "And it is not meet that they should be suffered to cumber the ground always." God cannot be glorified in this way of disposing of unfruitful per-

sons. If such men should be suffered to live always in such a state as this, it would be so far from being to the glory of God, that it would be to the disparagement of the wisdom of God, to continue them in a state so unsuitable for them, forever spending the fruits of his bounty in vain upon them. It would also be a disparagement to his justice; for this is a world where "all things come alike to all, and there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked." If there were no other state but this for wicked men to be in, justice could not possibly take place. It would also reflect upon the holiness of God. Forever to uphold this world for a habitation of such persons, and forever to continue the communications of his bounty and goodness to them, would appear as though he were disposed to countenance and encourage sin and wickedness.

2. If men do not bring forth fruit to God, they are not fit to be disposed of in heaven. Heaven, above all others, is the most improper place for them. Every thing appertaining to that state is unsuitable for them. The company is most unsuitable. The original inhabitants of that world are the angels. But what a disagreeable union would that be, to unite wicked men and angels in the same society! The employments of that world are unsuitable. The employments are serving and glorifying God. How unsuitable then would it be to plant barren trees in that heavenly paradise, trees that would bring forth no fruit to the divine glory! The enjoyments of heaven are unsuitable. The enjoyments are holy and spiritual enjoyments, the happiness of beholding the glory of God, and praising his name, and the like. But these enjoyments are as unsuitable as can be to the carnal earthly minds of wicked men. They would be no enjoyments to them; but on the contrary would be most disagreeable, and what they cannot relish, but entirely nauseate.

The design of heaven is unsuitable to them. The design of God in making heaven was, that it might be a place of holy habitation, for the reward of the righteous, and not a habitation for wicked men. It would greatly reflect on the wisdom of God to dispose of wicked men there; for it would be the greatest confusion. But God is not the author of confusion, 1 Cor. xiv. 33. It would be contrary to the holiness of God, to take wicked men so near to himself, into his glorious presence, to dwell forever in that part of the creation which is, as it were, his own palace, and to sit at his table. We read in Psalm v. 4, "Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with thee." Therefore it would doubtless be impossible that the end of the existence of wicked men should be in any wise answered by the placing of them in heaven.

IV. Men who bring forth no fruit to God, yet in suffering destruction may be useful. Although they be not useful actively, or by any thing which they do; yet they may be useful in what they may suffer; just as a barren tree, which is no way useful standing in the vineyard, yet may be good fuel, and be very useful in the fire. God can find use for the most wicked men; he hath his use for vessels of wrath as well as for vessels of mercy; as in a house there is use for vessels unto dishonor, as well as for vessels unto honor. 2 Tim. ii. 20, "In a great house there are not only vessels of gold, and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor." Prov. xvi. 4, "The Lord hath made all things for himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil." I shall briefly take notice of what ends God accomplishes by it.

1. Unfruitful persons are of use in their destruction for the glory of God's justice. It was the will of God to glorify his justice, as well as his mercy, on his creatures. The vindictive justice of God is a glorious attribute, as well as his mercy; and the glory of this attribute appears in the everlasting destruction and ruin of the barren and unfruitful.

The glory of divine justice in the perdition of ungodly men appears wonderful and glorious in the eyes of the saints and angels in heaven. Hence we have an account, that they sing praises to God, and extol his justice at the sight of the awful judgments which he inflicts on wicked men, Rev. xvi. 5, 6, "Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and art to come, because thou hast judged thus; for they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy:" and Rev. xix. 1, 2, "And after these things I heard a great voice, saying, Alleluia: salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God; for true and righteous are his judgments; for he hath judged the great WHORE, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand."

2. Unfruitful persons in their destruction are of use for God to glorify his majesty upon them. The awful majesty of God remarkably appears in those dreadful and amazing punishments which he inflicts on those who rise up against him, and contemn him. A sense of the majesty of an earthly prince is supported very much by a sense of its being a dreadful thing to affront him. God glorifies his own majesty in the destruction of wicked men; and herein he appears infinitely great, in that it appears to be an infinitely dreadful thing to offend him. How awful doth the majesty of God appear in the dreadfulness of his anger! This we may learn to be one end of the damnation of the wicked, from Rom. ix. 22: "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?"

It is often spoken of God, that he is a terrible God. It is a part of the majesty and glory of God, that he is a terrible God. God tells Pharaoh, that for this cause he raised him up, that he might show his power in him, and that his name might be declared through all the earth, in his destruction, Exod. ix 15, 16; and again chap. xiv. 17, "I will get me honor upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen."

3. The destruction of the unfruitful is of use, to give the saints a greater sense of their happiness, and of God's grace to them. The wicked will be destroyed and tormented in the view of the saints, and other inhabitants of heaven. This we are taught in Rev. xiv. 10: "The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture, into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb." And in Isaiah lxvi. 24: "And they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched, and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh."

When the saints in heaven shall look upon the damned in hell it will serve to give them a greater sense of their own happiness, seeing how vastly different their case is from their own. The view of the doleful condition of the damned will make them the more prize their own blessedness. When they shall see how dreadful the anger of God is, it will make them the more prize his love. They will rejoice so much the more that they are not the objects of God's anger, but of his favor; that they are not the subjects of his dreadful wrath, but are treated as his children, are taken near to him, to dwell in the everlasting embraces of his love.

When they shall see the misery of the damned, it will give them a greater sense of the distinguishing grace and love of God to them, that God should from all eternity set his love on them, and make so great a difference between them and others who are of the same species with them, are no worse by nature than

they, and have deserved no worse of God than they. When they shall look upon the misery of the damned, and consider how different their own state is from theirs, and that it is only free and sovereign grace that makes the difference, what a great sense will this give them of the wonderful grace of God to them! And how will it heighten their praises! With how much greater admiration and exultation of soul will they sing of the free and sovereign grace of God to them!

When they shall look upon the damned, and see their misery, how will heaven ring with the praises of God's justice towards the wicked, and his grace towards the saints! And with how much greater enlargement of heart will they praise Jesus Christ their Redeemer, that ever he was pleased to set his love upon them, his dying love! And that he should so distinguish them as to spill his blood, and make his soul an offering, to redeem them from that so great misery, and to bring them to such exceeding happiness!

With what love and ecstasy will they sing that song in Rev. v. 9, 10, "Thou art worthy: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every tongue, and kindred, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests." One end which the apostle mentions why God appointed vessels of wrath, is the more to make known the wonderfulness of his mercy towards the saints. In Rom. ix. 22, 23, there are two ends mentioned: "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?" That is one end, then another is mentioned immediately after: "And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory."

APPLICATION.

1. Hence we may learn, how just and righteous God is in the destruction of those who bring forth no fruit to God. Seeing there is no other way in which they can be useful, or in which the end of their being can be obtained, certainly it is most just that God should thus dispose of them. Why should God be frustrated of his end through their perverseness? If men will not do the work for which he hath made and fitted them; if they, through a spirit of opposition and rebellion against God, refuse; yet why should God suffer himself to be disappointed of his end in making them? It doth not become the infinite greatness and majesty of God, to suffer himself to be disappointed and frustrated by the wickedness and perverseness of sinful worms of the dust. If God should suffer this, it would seem to argue, either a want of wisdom in God to fix upon a good end, or a want of power to accomplish it.

God made all men that they might be useful; and if they will not be useful in their conduct and actions, how just is it that God should make them useful in their sufferings! God made all men for his own glory; and if they, contrary to the revealed will of God, refuse to glorify him actively and willingly, how just is it that God should glorify himself upon them in what he doth with them!

It hath been shown, that there is no other way wherein this can be done, but by their destruction. Surely, therefore, it must be just and righteous that God should destroy them.

Men are under no natural necessity of being put to this use of glorifying God in their sufferings. God gives them opportunity of glorifying him in doing, in bringing forth fruit, puts them under advantages for it, and uses many means to bring them to it. But if they will not be useful this way, it is very just that

God should make them useful in the only remaining way in which they can be useful, viz., in their destruction. God is not forward to put them to this use. He tells us that he hath "no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live," Ezek. xxiii. 11. God represents the destruction of sinners as a work to which he is backward; yet it is meet that they should be destroyed, rather than that they should be suffered to frustrate God of the end of their being. Who can blame the husbandman for cutting down and burning a barren tree, after he hath digged about it, and dunged it, and used all proper means to make it fruitful?

Let those among us consider this, who have lived all their lives hitherto unprofitably, and never have brought forth any fruit to God's glory, notwithstanding all the means that have been used with them. Consider how just it would be if God should utterly destroy you, and glorify himself upon you in that way; and what a wonder of patience it is, that God hath not done it before now.

II. This subject ought to put you upon examining yourselves, whether you be not wholly useless creatures. You have now heard, that those who bring forth no fruit to God, are, as to any good they do, wholly useless. Inquire, therefore, whether you have ever in your lives brought forth any fruit to God. Have you ever done any thing from a gracious respect to God, or out of love to God? By only seeking your worldly interest, you do not bring forth fruit to God. It is not bringing forth fruit to God, for you to come to public worship on the Sabbath, to pray in your families, and other such like things, merely in compliance with the general custom. It is not to bring forth fruit to God, that you be sober, moral and religious, only to be seen of men, or out of respect to your own credit and honor. How is that for God which is only for the sake of custom, or the esteem of men?

It is not to bring forth fruit to God, for men to pray, and read, and hear, and to be strict and diligent in religious and moral duties, merely from the fear of hell. What thanks are due to you for not loving your own misery, and for being willing to take some pains to escape burning in hell to all eternity? There is ne'er a devil in hell but would gladly do the same: Hos. x. 1, "Israel is an *empty* vine; he bringeth forth fruit *unto himself*."

There is no fruit brought forth to God, where there is nothing done in any wise from love to God, or from any true respect to him. God looketh at the heart. He doth not stand in need of our services, neither is he benefited by any thing that we can do. He doth not receive any thing of us, because it benefits him, but only as a suitable testimony of our love and respect to him. This is the fruit that he seeks. Men themselves will not accept of those shows of friendship, which they think are hypocritical, and come not from the heart. How much less should God, who searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins of the children of men! John iv. 23, "God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

Inquire, therefore, whether you ever in your lives did the least thing out of love to God. Have you not done all for yourselves? Zech. vii. 5, 6, "When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even unto me? And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did ye not eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?"

III. Another use of this subject may be of *conviction* and *humiliation* to those who never have brought forth any fruit to God. If, upon examination, you find that you have never in all your lives done any thing out of a true respect to God, then it hath been demonstrated, that, as to any thing which you do, you

are altogether useless creatures. And consider, what a shameful thing it is for such rational beings as you are, and placed under such advantages for usefulness, yet to be wholly useless, and to live in the world to no purpose!

We esteem it a very mean character in any person, that he is a worthless, insignificant person; and to be called so is taken as a great reproach. But consider seriously, whether you can clear yourselves of this character. Set reason to work; can you rationally suppose, that you do in any measure answer the end for which God gave you your being, and made you of a nature superior to the beasts? But that you may be sensible what cause you have to be ashamed of your unprofitableness, consider the following things.

1. How much God hath bestowed upon you, in the endowments of your nature. God hath made you rational, intelligent creatures, hath endowed you with noble powers, those endowments wherein the natural image of God consists. You are vastly exalted in your nature above other kinds of creatures here below. You are capable of a thousand times as much as any of the brute creatures, He hath given you a power of understanding, which is capable of vastly extending itself, of looking back to the beginning of time, and of considering what was before the world was, and of looking forward beyond the end of time. It is capable of extending beyond the utmost limits of the universe; and is a faculty whereby you are akin to angels, and are capable even of knowing God, of contemplating the divine Being, and his glorious perfections, manifested in his works and in his word. You have souls capable of being the habitation of the Holy Spirit of God, and his divine grace. You are capable of the noble employments of angels.

How lamentable and shameful it is, that such a creature should be altogether useless, and living in vain! How lamentable that such a noble and excellent piece of divine workmanship should fail of its end, and be to no purpose! Was it ever worth the while for God to make you such a creature, with such a noble nature, and so much above other kinds of creatures, only to eat, and drink, and gratify your sensual appetites? How lamentable and shameful to you, that such a noble tree should be more useless than any tree of the forest; that man, whom God hath thus set in honor, should make himself more worthless than the beasts that perish!

2. How much God hath done for you in the creation of the world. He made the earth, and seas, and all the fulness of them, for the use of man, and hath given them to him: Psal. cxv. 16, "The earth hath he given to the children of men." He made the vast variety of creatures for man's use and service: Gen. i. 28, "Have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." For the same purpose he made all the plants, and herbs, and trees of the field: Gen. i. 29, "I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree, yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat." He made the sun in the heavens, that glorious luminary, that wonderful globe of light, to give light to man, and to constitute the difference between day and night. He also made the moon, and the vast multitude of stars, for the use of man, to be to him *for signs and seasons.*

What great provision hath God made for man! What a vast variety of good things for food, and otherwise to be for his convenience, to put him under advantages to be useful! How lamentable is it, that after all these things he should be a useless creature in the world!

3. How much is done for you in the course of God's common providence! Consider how nature is continually laboring for you. The sun is, as it were, in

a ferment for mankind, unweariedly running his course from year to year, and from day to day, and spending his rays upon man, to put him under advantage to be useful; every day giving him light that he may have opportunity to behold the glorious wisdom of God, and to see and serve God. The winds and clouds are continually laboring for you, and the waters are going in a constant circulation, ascending in the air from the seas, descending in rain, gathering in streams and rivers, returning to the sea, and again ascending and descending, for you. The earth is continually laboring to bring forth her fruit for your support. The trees of the field are laboring and spending their strength for you. And how many of the poor brute creatures are continually laboring for you, and spending their strength for you! How much of the fulness of the earth is spent upon you! How many of God's creatures are devoured by you! How many of the lives of the living creatures of God are destroyed for your sake, for your support and comfort!

Now, how lamentable will it be, if, after all, you be altogether useless, and live to no purpose! What mere cumberers of the ground will you be! Agreeably to Luke xiii. 7. Nature, which thus continually labors for you, will be burdened with you. This seems to be what the apostle means, Rom. vii. 20, 21, 22, where he tells us, that the creation is made subject to vanity, and brought into the bondage of corruption; and that the whole creation groans, and travails in pain, under this bondage.

4. How much is done for you in the use of the means of grace! How much hath God done to provide you with suitable means and advantages for usefulness! How many prophets hath God sent into the world, in different ages, inspiring them with his Holy Spirit, and enabling them to work many miracles to confirm their word, whereby you now have the written word of God to instruct you! How great a thing hath God done for you, to give you opportunity and advantage to be useful, in that he hath sent his own Son into the world! He who is really and truly God, united himself to the human nature and became man, to be a prophet and teacher to you and other sinners. Yea, he laid down his life to make atonement for sin, that you might have encouragement to serve God with hopes of acceptance.

How many ordinances have been instituted for you! How much of the labor of the ministers of God have been spent upon you! Is not that true concerning you which is written in Isaiah v., at the beginning, concerning the vineyard planted in a very fruitful hill, and fenced and cultivated with peculiar care and pains, which yet proved unfruitful? How much hath the dresser of the vineyard digged about the barren tree, and dunged it, and yet it remains barren!

5. Consider what a shame it is that you should live in vain, when all the other creatures, that are inferior to you, do glorify their Creator, according to their nature. You who are so highly exalted in the world, are more useless than the brute creation; yea, than the meanest worms, or things without life, as earth and stones: for they all do answer their end, in the way in which nature hath fitted them for it; none of them fail of it. They are all useful in their places, all render their proper tribute of praise to their Creator; while you are mere nuisances in the creation, and burdens to the earth; as any tree of the forest is more useful than the vine, if it bear not fruit.

IV. Let me, in a farther application of this doctrine, *exhort* you by all means to bring forth fruit to God. Let it be your constant endeavor to be in this way actively useful in the world. Here consider three things:

1 What an honor it will be to such poor creatures as you are, to bring

forth fruit to the divine glory. What is such a poor worm as man, that he should be enabled to bring forth any fruit to God! It is the greatest honor of the nature of man, that God hath given him a capacity of glorifying the great Creator. It is what no other creature in this lower world can do, in the same manner as man. There is no creature in the visible world that is capable of actively glorifying God, but man.

2. In bringing forth fruit to God, you will be so profitable to none as to yourselves; you cannot thereby be profitable to God. Job xxii. 2, "Can a man be profitable to God?" You may thereby be profitable to your fellow creatures; yet not so much as to yourselves. The fruit which you bring forth to God will be a greater benefit to yourselves than to any one living. You will be more useful to yourselves than to any one else.

Although you are under a natural obligation to bring forth fruit to God, yet God doth not require it of you without a reward. He will richly reward you for it. In requiring you to bring forth fruit to him, he doth but require you to bring forth fruit to your own happiness. You will taste the sweetness of your own fruit. It will be most profitable to you in this world to bring forth fruit to God; it will be exceedingly to your benefit while here. It will be pleasant to you to lead a fruitful and holy life; the pleasure will be beyond the labor. Besides this, God hath promised to such a life everlasting rewards, unspeakable, infinite benefits. So that by it you will infinitely advance your own interest.

3. If you remain thus unprofitable, and be not actively useful, surely God will obtain his end of you, in your destruction. He will say concerning the barren tree, "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" Christ, in John xv. 6, tells us, "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." This is spoken of the barren branches in the vine. How would you yourselves do in such a case with a barren tree in an orchard, or with weeds and tares in your fields? Doubtless, if it were in your power, you would utterly destroy them.

God will have his end; he will accomplish it. As it is not meet that God should be frustrated, so he will not be frustrated. Though all men and devils unite their endeavors, they cannot frustrate God in any thing; and "though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished;" Prov. xi. 21. God hath sworn by his great name, that he will have his glory of men, whether they will actively glorify him or no. Numb. xiv. 21, 22, 23, "But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; surely they shall not see the land which I sware unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me, see it."

"The ax lieth at the root of the trees; and every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire," Matt. iii. 10. The end of those men who bring forth nothing but briers and thorns is to be burned, as in Heb. vi. 7, 8: "For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessings from God: but that which beareth thorns and briers, is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned." So we read of the tares, Matt. xiii. 30: "Let both grow together until the harvest; and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them:" and in verses 40, 41, 42, "As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be at the end of the world.

The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

So it is said of the chaff, Matt. iii. 12, "Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

If you continue not to bring forth any fruit to the divine glory, as you have hitherto done, hell will be the only fit place for you. It is a place prepared on purpose to be a receptacle of such persons. In hell nature ceases to labor any more for sinners: the sun doth not run his course to shine upon them, the earth doth not bring forth her fruits to be consumed upon them there. There they will have no opportunity to consume the fruits of divine goodness on their lusts. In hell they can prejudice or encumber nothing, upon which God sets any value. There the faithful servants and ministers of God will no longer spend their strength in vain upon them. When the barren tree is in the fire, the servants of the husbandman are freed from any further labor or toil in digging about it, and manuring it.

In hell they will no more have opportunity to clog and discourage the flourishing of religion, and to destroy much good, as they often do in this world. In hell they will no more have opportunity to corrupt others by their ill example. In hell they will no more have it in their power to offend the godly; they may hurt and torment one another; but the godly will be out of their reach. In hell there will be no ordinances, no Sabbaths, no sacraments, no sacred things, for them to profane and defile by their careless and hypocritical attendance.

Hell, therefore, if you remain unfruitful and cumberers of the ground, will be the fittest place for you, and there you will surely have your portion assigned you. There God will get himself honor upon you; there he will magnify himself in your ruin, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb; and will be praised upon that account by the saints, at the day of judgment; and by all the host of heaven throughout everlasting ages.

SERMON XV.

SINNERS IN THE HANDS OF AN ANGRY GOD.

DEUTERONOMY xxxii. 35.—Their foot shall slide in due time.

IN this verse is threatened the vengeance of God on the wicked unbelieving Israelites, that were God's visible people, and lived under means of grace; and that notwithstanding all God's wonderful works that he had wrought towards that people, yet remained, as is expressed verse 28, void of counsel, having no understanding in them; and that, under all the cultivations of heaven, brought forth bitter and poisonous fruit; as in the two verses next preceding the text.

The expression that I have chosen for my text, *their foot shall slide in due time*, seems to imply the following things relating to the punishment and destruction that these wicked Israelites were exposed to.

1. That they were always exposed to destruction; as one that stands or walks in slippery places is always exposed to fall. This is implied in the manner of their destruction's coming upon them, being represented by their foot's sliding. The same is expressed, Psalm lxxiii. 18: "Surely thou didst set them in slippery places; thou castedst them down into destruction."

2. It implies, that they were always exposed to sudden, unexpected destruction. As he that walks in slippery places is every moment liable to fall, he cannot foresee one moment whether he shall stand or fall the next; and when he does fall, he falls at once, without warning, which is also expressed in that Psalm lxxiii. 18, 19: "Surely thou didst set them in slippery places; thou castedst them down into destruction: how are they brought into desolation as in a moment."

3. Another thing implied is, that they are liable to fall of themselves, without being thrown down by the hand of another; as he that stands or walks on slippery ground needs nothing but his own weight to throw him down.

4. That the reason why they are not fallen already, and do not fall now, is only that God's appointed time is not come. For it is said that when that due time, or appointed time comes, *their feet shall slide*. Then they shall be left to fall, as they are inclined by their own weight. God will not hold them up in these slippery places any longer, but will let them go; and then, at that very instant, they shall fall into destruction; as he that stands in such slippery declining ground on the edge of a pit that he cannot stand alone, when he is let go he immediately falls and is lost.

The observation from the words that I would now insist upon is this.

There is nothing that keeps wicked men at any one moment out of hell, but the mere pleasure of God.

By the mere pleasure of God, I mean his sovereign pleasure, his arbitrary will, restrained by no obligation, hindered by no manner of difficulty, any more than if nothing else but God's mere will had in the least degree or in any respect whatsoever, any hand in the preservation of wicked men one moment.

The truth of this observation may appear by the following considerations.

1. There is no want of power in God to cast wicked men into hell at any moment. Men's hands cannot be strong when God rises up: the strongest have no power to resist him, nor can any deliver out of his hands.

He is not only able to cast wicked men into hell, but he can most easily do

it. Sometimes an earthly prince meets with a great deal of difficulty to subdue a rebel, that has found means to fortify himself, and has made himself strong by the number of his followers. But it is not so with God. There is no fortress that is any defence against the power of God. Though hand join in hand, and vast multitudes of God's enemies combine and associate themselves, they are easily broken in pieces: they are as great heaps of light chaff before the whirlwind; or large quantities of dry stubble before devouring flames. We find it easy to tread on and crush a worm that we see crawling on the earth; so it is easy for us to cut or singe a slender thread that any thing hangs by; thus easy is it for God, when he pleases, to cast his enemies down to hell. What are we, that we should think to stand before him, at whose rebuke the earth trembles, and before whom the rocks are thrown down!

2. They deserve to be cast into hell; so that divine justice never stands in the way, it makes no objection against God's using his power at any moment to destroy them. Yea, on the contrary, justice calls aloud for an infinite punishment of their sins. Divine justice says of the tree that brings forth such grapes of Sodom, "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" Luke xiii. 7. The sword of divine justice is every moment brandished over their heads, and it is nothing but the hand of arbitrary mercy, and God's mere will, that holds it back.

3. They are already under a sentence of condemnation to hell. They do not only justly deserve to be cast down thither, but the sentence of the law of God, that eternal and immutable rule of righteousness that God has fixed between him and mankind, is gone out against them; and stands against them; so that they are bound over already to hell: John iii. 18, "He that believeth not is condemned already." So that every unconverted man properly belongs to hell; that is his place; from thence he is: John viii. 23, "Ye are from beneath:" and thither he is bound; it is the place that justice, and God's word, and the sentence of his unchangeable law, assign to him.

4. They are now the objects of that very same anger and wrath of God, that is expressed in the torments of hell: and the reason why they do not go down to hell at each moment, is not because God, in whose power they are, is not then very angry with them; as angry, as he is with many of those miserable creatures that he is now tormenting in hell, and do there feel and bear the fierceness of his wrath. Yea, God is a great deal more angry with great numbers that are now on earth; yea, doubtless, with many that are now in this congregation, that, it may be, are at ease and quiet, than he is with many of those that are now in the flames of hell.

So that it is not because God is unmindful of their wickedness, and does not resent it, that he does not let loose his hand and cut them off. God is not altogether such a one as themselves, though they may imagine him to be so. The wrath of God burns against them; their damnation does not slumber; the pit is prepared; the fire is made ready; the furnace is now hot; ready to receive them; the flames do now rage and glow. The glittering sword is whet, and held over them, and the pit hath opened her mouth under them.

5. The devil stands ready to fall upon them, and seize them as his own, at what moment God shall permit him. They belong to him; he has their souls in his possession, and under his dominion. The Scripture represents them as his goods, Luke xi. 21. The devils watch them; they are ever by them, at their right hand; they stand waiting for them, like greedy hungry lions that see their prey, and expect to have it, but are for the present kept back; if God should withdraw his hand by which they are restrained, they would in one moment fly upon their poor souls. The old serpent is gaping for them; hell opens its

mouth wide to receive them; and if God should permit it, they would be hastily swallowed up and lost.

6. There are in the souls of wicked men those hellish principles reigning, that would presently kindle and flame out into hell-fire, if it were not for God's restraints. There is laid in the very nature of carnal men, a foundation for the torments of hell: there are those corrupt principles, in reigning power in them, and in full possession of them, that are the beginnings of hell-fire. These principles are active and powerful, exceeding violent in their nature, and if it were not for the restraining hand of God upon them, they would soon break out, they would flame out after the same manner as the same corruptions, the same enmity does in the hearts of damned souls, and would beget the same torments in them as they do in them. The souls of the wicked are in Scripture compared to the troubled sea, Isaiah lvii. 20. For the present God restrains their wickedness by his mighty power, as he does the raging waves of the troubled sea, saying, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further;" but if God should withdraw that restraining power, it would soon carry all before it. Sin is the ruin and misery of the soul; it is destructive in its nature; and if God should leave it without restraint, there would need nothing else to make the soul perfectly miserable. The corruption of the heart of man is a thing that is immoderate and boundless in its fury; and while wicked men live here, it is like fire pent up by God's restraints, whereas if it were let loose, it would set on fire the course of nature; and as the heart is now a sink of sin, so, if sin was not restrained, it would immediately turn the soul into a fiery oven, or a furnace of fire and brimstone.

7. It is no security to wicked men for one moment, that there are no visible means of death at hand. It is no security to a natural man, that he is now in health, and that he does not see which way he should now immediately go out of the world by any accident, and that there is no visible danger in any respect in his circumstances. The manifold and continual experience of the world in all ages, shows that this is no evidence that a man is not on the very brink of eternity, and that the next step will not be into another world. The unseen, unthought of ways and means of persons' going suddenly out of the world are innumerable and inconceivable. Unconverted men walk over the pit of hell on a rotten covering, and there are innumerable places in this covering so weak that they will not bear their weight, and these places are not seen. The arrows of death fly unseen at noonday; the sharpest sight cannot discern them. God has so many different, unsearchable ways of taking wicked men out of the world and sending them to hell, that there is nothing to make it appear, that God had need to be at the expense of a miracle, or go out of the ordinary course of his providence, to destroy any wicked man, at any moment. All the means that there are of sinners' going out of the world, are so in God's hands, and so absolutely subject to his power and determination, that it does not depend at all less on the mere will of God, whether sinners shall at any moment go to hell, than if means were never made use of, or at all concerned in the case.

8. Natural men's prudence and care to preserve their own lives, or the care of others to preserve them, do not secure them a moment. This, divine providence and universal experience do also bear testimony to. There is this clear evidence that men's own wisdom is no security to them from death; that if it were otherwise we should see some difference between the wise and politic men of the world, and others, with regard to their liableness to early and unexpected death; but how is it in fact? Eccles. ii. 16, "How dieth the wise man? As the fool."

9. All wicked men's pains and contrivance they use to escape hell, while

they continue to reject Christ, and so remain wicked men, do not secure them from hell one moment. Almost every natural man that hears of hell, flatters himself that he shall escape it; he depends upon himself for his own security, he flatters himself in what he has done, in what he is now doing, or what he intends to do; every one lays out matters in his own mind how he shall avoid damnation, and flatters himself that he contrives wel' for himself, and that his schemes will not fail. They hear indeed that there are but few saved, and that the bigger part of men that have died heretofore are gone to hell; but each one imagines that he lays out matters better for his own escape than others have done: he does not intend to come to that place of torment; he says within himself, that he intends to take care that shall be effectual, and to order matters so for himself as not to fail.

But the foolish children of men do miserably delude themselves in their own schemes, and in their confidence in their own strength and wisdom, they trust to nothing but a shadow. The bigger part of those that heretofore have lived under the same means of grace, and are now dead, are undoubtedly gone to hell; and it was not because they were not as wise as those that are now alive; it was not because they did not lay out matters as well for themselves to secure their own escape. If it were so that we could come to speak with them, and could inquire of them, one by one, whether they expected, when alive, and when they used to hear about hell, ever to be subjects of that misery, we, doubtless, should hear one and another reply, "No, I never intended to come here: I had laid out matters otherwise in my mind; I thought I should contrive well for myself: I thought my scheme good: I intended to take effectual care; but it came upon me unexpectedly; I did not look for it at that time, and in that manner; it came as a thief: death outwitted me: God's wrath was too quick for me: O my cursed foolishness! I was flattering myself, and pleasing myself with vain dreams of what I would do hereafter; and when I was saying peace and safety, then sudden destruction came upon me."

10. God has laid himself under no obligation, by any promise, to keep any natural man out of hell one moment: God certainly has made no promises either of eternal life, or of any deliverance or preservation from eternal death, but what are contained in the covenant of grace, the promises that are given in Christ, in whom all the promises are yea and amen. But surely they have no interest in the promises of the covenant of grace that are not the children of the covenant, and that do not believe in any of the promises of the covenant, and have no interest in the Mediator of the covenant.

So that, whatever some have imagined and pretended about promises made to natural men's earnest seeking and knocking, it is plain and manifest, that whatever pains a natural man takes in religion, whatever prayers he makes, till he believes in Christ, God is under no manner of obligation to keep him a moment from eternal destruction.

So that thus it is, that natural men are held in the hand of God over the pit of hell; they have deserved the fiery pit, and are already sentenced to it; and God is dreadfully provoked, his anger is as great towards them as to those that are actually suffering the executions of the fierceness of his wrath in hell, and they have done nothing in the least, to appease or abate that anger, neither is God in the least bound by any promise to hold them up one moment; the devil is waiting for them, hell is gaping for them, the flames gather and flash about them, and would fain lay hold on them and swallow them up; the fire pent up in their own hearts is struggling to break out; and they have no interest in any Mediator, there are no means within reach that can be any security to them.

In short, they have no refuge, nothing to take hold of; all that preserves them every moment is the mere arbitrary will, and uncovenanted, unobliged forbearance of an incensed God.

APPLICATION.

The use may be of awakening to unconverted persons in this congregation. This that you have heard is the case of every one of you that are out of Christ. That world of misery, that lake of burning brimstone, is extended abroad under you. There is the dreadful pit of the glowing flames of the wrath of God; there is hell's wide gaping mouth open; and you have nothing to stand upon, nor any thing to take hold of. There is nothing between you and hell but the air; it is only the power and mere pleasure of God that holds you up.

You probably are not sensible of this; you find you are kept out of hell, but do not see the hand of God in it; but look at other things, as the good state of your bodily constitution, your care of your own life, and the means you use for your own preservation. But indeed these things are nothing; if God should withdraw his hand, they would avail no more to keep you from falling, than the thin air to hold up a person that is suspended in it.

Your wickedness makes you as it were heavy as lead, and to tend downwards with great weight and pressure towards hell; and if God should let you go, you would immediately sink and swiftly descend and plunge into the bottomless gulf, and your healthy constitution, and your own care and prudence, and best contrivance, and all your righteousness, would have no more influence to uphold you and keep you out of hell, than a spider's web would have to stop a falling rock. Were it not that so is the sovereign pleasure of God, the earth would not bear you one moment; for you are a burden to it; the creation groans with you; the creature is made subject to the bondage of your corruption, not willingly; the sun does not willingly shine upon you to give you light to serve sin and Satan; the earth does not willingly yield her increase to satisfy your lusts; nor is it willingly a stage for your wickedness to be acted upon; the air does not willingly serve you for breath to maintain the flame of life in your vitals, while you spend your life in the service of God's enemies. God's creatures are good, and were made for men to serve God with, and do not willingly subserve to any other purpose, and groan when they are abused to purposes so directly contrary to their nature and end. And the world would spew you out, were it not for the sovereign hand of him who hath subjected it in hope. There are the black clouds of God's wrath now hanging directly over your heads, full of the dreadful storm, and big with thunder; and were it not for the restraining hand of God, it would immediately burst forth upon you. The sovereign pleasure of God, for the present, stays his rough wind; otherwise it would come with fury, and your destruction would come like a whirlwind, and you would be like the chaff of the summer threshing floor.

The wrath of God is like great waters that are dammed for the present; they increase more and more, and rise higher and higher, till an outlet is given; and the longer the stream is stopped, the more rapid and mighty is its course, when once it is let loose. It is true, that judgment against your evil work has not been executed hitherto; the floods of God's vengeance have been withheld; but your guilt in the mean time is constantly increasing, and you are every day treasuring up more wrath; the waters are continually rising, and waxing more and more mighty; and there is nothing but the mere pleasure of God, that holds the waters back, that are unwilling to be stopped, and press hard to go forward. If God should only withdraw his hand from the floodgate, it would immediately

fly open, and the fiery floods of the fierceness and wrath of God, would rush forth with inconceivable fury, and would come upon you with omnipotent power; and if your strength were ten thousand times greater than it is, yea, ten thousand times greater than the strength of the stoutest, sturdiest devil in hell it would be nothing to withstand or endure it.

The bow of God's wrath is bent, and the arrow made ready on the string, and justice bends the arrow at your heart, and strains the bow, and it is nothing but the mere pleasure of God, and that of an angry God, without any promise or obligation at all, that keeps the arrow one moment from being made drunk with your blood.

Thus are all you that never passed under a great change of heart, by the mighty power of the Spirit of God upon your souls; all that were never born again, and made new creatures, and raised from being dead in sin, to a state of new, and before altogether unexperienced light and life, (however you may have reformed your life in many things, and may have had religious affections, and may keep up a form of religion in your families and closets, and in the houses of God, and may be strict in it,) you are thus in the hands of an angry God; it is nothing but his mere pleasure that keeps you from being this moment swallowed up in everlasting destruction.

However unconvinced you may now be of the truth of what you hear, by and by you will be fully convinced of it. Those that are gone from being in the like circumstances with you, see that it was so with them; for destruction came suddenly upon most of them; when they expected nothing of it, and while they were saying, Peace and safety: now they see, that those things that they depended on for peace and safety were nothing but thin air and empty shadows.

The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect, over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked; his wrath towards you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the fire; he is of purer eyes than to bear to have you in his sight; you are ten thousand times so abominable in his eyes, as the most hateful and venomous serpent is in ours. You have offended him infinitely more than ever a stubborn rebel did his prince: and yet it is nothing but his hand that holds you from falling into the fire every moment: it is ascribed to nothing else, that you did not go to hell the last night; that you was suffered to awake again in this world, after you closed your eyes to sleep; and there is no other reason to be given, why you have not dropped into hell since you arose in the morning, but that God's hand has held you up: there is no other reason to be given why you have not gone to hell, since you have sat here in the house of God, provoking his pure eyes by your sinful wicked manner of attending his solemn worship: yea, there is nothing else that is to be given as a reason why you do not this very moment drop down into hell.

O sinner! consider the fearful danger you are in: it is a great furnace of wrath, a wide and bottomless pit, full of the fire of wrath, that you are held over in the hand of that God, whose wrath is provoked and incensed as much against you, as against many of the damned in hell: you hang by a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it, and ready every moment to singe it, and burn it asunder; and you have no interest in any Mediator, and nothing to lay hold of to save yourself, nothing to keep off the flames of wrath, nothing of your own, nothing that you ever have done, nothing that you can do, to induce God to spare you one moment.

And consider here more particularly several things concerning that wrath that you are in such danger of.

1. Whose wrath it is. It is the wrath of the infinite God. If it were only the wrath of man, though it were of the most potent prince, it would be comparatively little to be regarded. The wrath of kings is very much dreaded, especially of absolute monarchs, that have the possessions and lives of their subjects wholly in their power, to be disposed of at their mere will. Prov. xx. 2, "The fear of a king is as the roaring of a lion: whoso provoketh him to anger, sinneth against his own soul." The subject that very much enrages an arbitrary prince, is liable to suffer the most extreme torments that human art can invent, or human power can inflict. But the greatest earthly potentates, in their greatest majesty and strength, and when clothed in their greatest terrors, are but feeble, despicable worms of the dust, in comparison of the great and almighty Creator and King of heaven and earth: it is but little that they can do, when most enraged, and when they have exerted the utmost of their fury. All the kings of the earth before God, are as grasshoppers; they are nothing, and less than nothing: both their love and their hatred is to be despised. The wrath of the great King of kings, is as much more terrible than theirs, as his majesty is greater. Luke xii. 4, 5, "And I say unto you, my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: fear him, which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him."

2. It is the fierceness of his wrath that you are exposed to. We often read of the fury of God; as in Isaiah lix. 18: "According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay fury to his adversaries." So Isaiah lxvi. 15, "For behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire." And so in many other places. So we read of God's fierceness, Rev. xix. 15. There we read of "the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." The words are exceedingly terrible: if it had only been said, "the wrath of God," the words would have implied that which is infinitely dreadful: but it is not only said so, but "the fierceness and wrath of God:" the fury of God! the fierceness of Jehovah! Oh how dreadful must that be! Who can utter or conceive what such expressions carry in them! But it is not only said so, but "the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." As though there would be a very great manifestation of his almighty power in what the fierceness of his wrath should inflict, as though omnipotence should be as it were enraged, and exerted, as men are wont to exert their strength in the fierceness of their wrath. Oh! then, what will be the consequence! What will become of the poor worm that shall suffer it! Whose hands can be strong! And whose heart endure! To what a dreadful, inexpressible, inconceivable depth of misery must the poor creature be sunk who shall be the subject of this!

Consider this, you that are here present, that yet remain in an unregenerate state. That God will execute the fierceness of his anger, implies, that he will inflict wrath without any pity: when God beholds the ineffable extremity of your case, and sees your torment so vastly disproportioned to your strength, and sees how your poor soul is crushed, and sinks down, as it were, into an infinite gloom; he will have no compassion upon you, he will not forbear the executions of his wrath, or in the least lighten his hand; there shall be no moderation or mercy, nor will God then at all stay his rough wind; he will have no regard to your welfare, nor be at all careful lest you should suffer too much in any other sense, than only that you should not suffer beyond what strict justice requires: nothing shall be withheld, because it is so hard for you to bear. Ezek.

viii. 18, "Therefore will I also deal in fury; mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity; and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them." Now God stands ready to pity you; this is a day of mercy; you may cry now with some encouragement of obtaining mercy: but when once the day of mercy is past, your most lamentable and dolorous cries and shrieks will be in vain; you will be wholly lost and thrown away of God, as to any regard to your welfare; God will have no other use to put you to, but only to suffer misery; you shall be continued in being to no other end; for you will be a vessel of wrath fitted to destruction; and there will be no other use of this vessel, but only to be filled full of wrath: God will be so far from pitying you when you cry to him, that it is said he will only "laugh and mock," Prov. i. 25, 26, &c.

How awful are those words, Isaiah lxiii. 3, which are the words of the great God: "I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury, and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment." It is perhaps impossible to conceive of words that carry in them greater manifestations of these three things, viz., contempt and hatred, and fierceness of indignation. If you cry to God to pity you, he will be so far from pitying you in your doleful case, or showing you the least regard or favor, that instead of that he will only tread you under foot: and though he will know that you cannot bear the weight of omnipotence treading upon you, yet he will not regard that, but he will crush you under his feet without mercy; he will crush out your blood, and make it fly, and it shall be sprinkled on his garments, so as to stain all his raiment. He will not only hate you, but he will have you in the utmost contempt; no place shall be thought fit for you but under his feet, to be trodden down as the mire in the streets.

3. The misery you are exposed to is that which God will inflict to that end, that he might show what that wrath of Jehovah is. God hath had it on his heart to show to angels and men, both how excellent his love is, and also how terrible his wrath is. Sometimes earthly kings have a mind to show how terrible their wrath is, by the extreme punishments they would execute on those that provoke them. Nebuchadnezzar, that mighty and haughty monarch of the Chaldean empire, was willing to show his wrath when enraged with Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego; and accordingly gave order that the burning fiery furnace should be heated seven times hotter than it was before; doubtless, it was raised to the utmost degree of fierceness that human art could raise it; but the great God is also willing to show his wrath, and magnify his awful Majesty and mighty power in the extreme sufferings of his enemies. Rom. ix. 22, "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering, the vessels of wrath fitted to destuction?" And seeing this is his design, and what he has determined, to show how terrible the unmixed, unrestrained wrath, the fury and fierceness of Jehovah is, he will do it to effect. There will be something accomplished and brought to pass that will be dreadful with a witness. When the great and angry God hath risen up and executed his awful vengeance on the poor sinner, and the wretch is actually suffering the infinite weight and power of his indignation, then will God call upon the whole universe to behold that awful majesty and mighty power that is to be seen in it. Isa. xxxiii. 12, 13, 14, "And the people shall be as the burnings of lime, as thorns cut up shall they be burnt in the fire. Hear, ye that are afar off, what I have done; and ye that are near, acknowledge my might. The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites," &c.

Thus it will be with you that are in an unconverted state, if you continue in it; the infinite might, and majesty, and terribleness, of the Omnipotent God

shall be magnified upon you in the ineffable strength of your torments: you shall be tormented in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb; and when you shall be in this state of suffering, the glorious inhabitants of heaven shall go forth and look on the awful spectacle, that they may see what the wrath and fierceness of the Almighty is; and when they have seen it, they will fall down and adore that great power and majesty. Isa. lxvi. 23, 24, "And it shall come to pass, that from one moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord. And they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me; for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched, and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh."

4. It is everlasting wrath. It would be dreadful to suffer this fierceness and wrath of Almighty God one moment; but you must suffer it to all eternity: there will be no end to this exquisite, horrible misery: when you look forward, you shall see a long forever, a boundless duration before you, which will swallow up your thoughts, and amaze your soul; and you will absolutely despair of ever having any deliverance, any end, any mitigation, any rest at all; you will know certainly that you must wear out long ages, millions of millions of ages, in wrestling and conflicting with this Almighty merciless vengeance; and then when you have so done, when so many ages have actually been spent by you in this manner, you will know that all is but a point to what remains. So that your punishment will indeed be infinite. Oh, who can express what the state of a soul in such circumstances is! All that we can possibly say about it, gives but a very feeble, faint representation of it; it is inexpressible and inconceivable: for "who knows the power of God's anger?"

How dreadful is the state of those that are daily and hourly in danger of this great wrath and infinite misery! But this is the dismal case of every soul in this congregation that has not been born again, however moral and strict, sober and religious, they may otherwise be. Oh that you would consider it, whether you be young or old! There is reason to think, that there are many in this congregation now hearing this discourse, that will actually be the subjects of this very misery to all eternity. We know not who they are, or in what seats they sit, or what thoughts they now have. It may be they are now at ease, and hear all these things without much disturbance, and are now flattering themselves that they are not the persons; promising themselves that they shall escape. If we knew that there was one person, and but one, in the whole congregation, that was to be the subject of this misery, what an awful thing it would be to think of! If we knew who it was, what an awful sight would it be to see such a person! How might all the rest of the congregation lift up a lamentable and bitter cry over him! But alas! Instead of one, how many is it likely will remember this discourse in hell! And it would be a wonder, if some that are now present should not be in hell in a very short time, before this year is out. And it would be no wonder if some persons, that now sit here in some seats of this meeting-house in health, and quiet and secure, should be there before to-morrow morning.

SERMON XVI

THE VAIN SELF-FLATTERIES OF THE SINNER.

PSALM XXXVI. 2—For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful.

In the foregoing verse, David says, that the transgression of the wicked said within his heart, "that there is no fear of God before his eyes;" that is, when he saw that the wicked went on in sin, in an allowed way of wickedness, it convinced him, that he was not afraid of those terrible judgments, and of that wrath which God hath threatened sinners. If he were afraid of these he could never go on so securely in sin, as he doth.

In our text he gives the reason why the wicked did not fear. It was a strange thing that men, who enjoyed such light as they did in the land of Israel, who read and heard those many awful threatenings which were written in the book of the law, should not be afraid to go on in sin. But saith the Psalmist, *They flatter themselves in their own eyes:* they have something or other which they make a foundation of encouragement, whereby they persuade themselves that they shall escape those judgments; and that makes them put far away the evil day.

In this manner he proceeds, until his iniquity be found to be hateful; that is, until he finds by experience that it is a more dreadful thing to sin against God, and break his holy commands, than he imagined. He thinks sin to be sweet, and hides it as a sweet morsel under his tongue: he loves it, and flatters himself in it, till at length he finds, by experience, that it is as bitter as gall and wormwood. Though he thinks the commission of sin to be lovely, yet he will find the fruit of it to be hateful, and what he cannot endure. Prov. xxiii 32, "At last it will bite like a serpent, and sting like an adder."

Here observe,

1. The subject spoken of is the WICKED MAN, of whom the Psalmist had been speaking in the foregoing verse.

2. His action in flattering himself in his own eyes; i. e., he makes himself and his case to appear to himself, or in his own eyes, better than it is.

3. How long he continues so to do, *until his iniquity be found to be hateful* Which may be taken for his sin itself, as the wicked will see how odious sin is to God, when he shall feel the effects of his hatred, and how hateful to angels and saints; or rather the cause is here put for the effect, the tree for its fruit, and he will find his iniquity to be hateful, as he will find the hatefulness and feel the terribleness of the FRUIT of his iniquity.

DOCTRINE.

Wicked men generally flatter themselves with hopes of escaping punishment, till it actually comes upon them.

There are but few sinners who despair, who give up the cause and conclude with themselves, that they shall go to hell; yet there are but few who do not go to hell. It is to be feared that men go to hell every day out of this country; yet very few of them suffer themselves to believe, that they are in any great danger of that punishment. They go on sinning and travelling in

the direct road to the pit; yet by one means or other they persuade themselves that they shall never fall into it.

In my present discourse, I shall,

1. Mention some things in confirmation of the doctrine, that sinners flatter themselves with the hope of impunity.

2. Mention some of the various ways wherein sinners flatter themselves in that hope.

3. Show that sinners generally go on flattering themselves, till punishment actually overtakes them.

I. I am to mention some things in confirmation of the doctrine, that sinners flatter themselves with the hope of future impunity.

1. We are so taught in the word of God. Besides our text, you may see, Deut. xxix. 18, 19, "Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the Lord our God. Lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood, and it come to pass when he heareth these words of this curse, that he *bless himself in his heart*, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst." Where it is supposed that they whose hearts turn away from God, and are roots that bear gall and wormwood, generally bless themselves in their hearts, saying, WE SHALL HAVE PEACE.

See also Psalm xlix. 17, 18: "When he dieth, he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him, though while he lived, he BLESSED HIS SOUL." And Psalm i. 21, "These things thou hast done, and I kept silence: thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thee."

2. It is very evident, that sinners flatter themselves that they shall escape punishment, by this, that otherwise they would be in dreadful and continual distress. Otherwise, as long as they are in sin, they could never live and go about so cheerfully as they now do: their lives would be filled with sorrow and mourning, and they would be in continual uneasiness and distress; as much as those that are exercised with some violent pain of body. But it is evident that it is not in fact so; it is apparent that men are careless and secure; that they are not much concerned about future punishment, and that they cheerfully pursue their business and recreations. Therefore they undoubtedly flatter themselves, that they shall not be eternally miserable in hell, as they are threatened in the word of God.

3. It is evident that they flatter themselves with hopes that they shall escape punishment, as otherwise they would certainly be restrained, at least from many of those sins in which they now live: they would not proceed in wilful courses of sin. The transgression of the wicked convinced the Psalmist, and is enough to convince every one, that there is no fear of God before his eyes, and that he flatters himself in his own eyes. It would be impossible for men allowedly from day to day to do those very things, which they know are threatened with everlasting destruction, if they did not some way encourage themselves, they should nevertheless escape that destruction.

II. I shall mention some of the various ways wherein sinners flatter themselves in their own eyes.

1. Some flatter themselves with a secret hope, that there is no such thing as another world. They hear a great deal of preaching, and a great deal of talk about hell, and about the eternal judgment; but those things do not seem to them to be real. They never saw any thing of them; they never saw hell, never saw the devils and damned spirits; and therefore are ready to say with

themselves, How do I know that there is any such thing as another world. When the beasts die, there is an end of them, and how do I know but that it will be so with me? Perhaps all these things are nothing but the inventions of men, nothing but cunningly devised fables.

Such thoughts are apt to rise in the minds of sinners, and the devil sets in to enforce them. Such thoughts are an ease to them; therefore they wish they were true, and that makes them the more ready to think that they are indeed true. So that they are hardened in the way of sin, by infidelity and atheistical thoughts. Psalm xiv. 1, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." Psalm xciv. 6, 7, "They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless. Yet they say, The Lord shall not see; neither shall the God of Jacob regard it."

2. Some flatter themselves that death is a great way off, and that they shall hereafter have much opportunity to seek salvation; and they think if they earnestly seek it, though it be a great while hence, they shall obtain. Although they see no reason to conclude that they shall live long, and perhaps they do not positively conclude that they shall; yet it doth not come into their minds that their lives are really uncertain, and that it is doubtful whether they will live another year. Such a thought as this doth not take any hold of them. And although they do not absolutely determine that they shall live to old age or to middle age, yet they secretly flatter themselves with such an imagination. They are disposed to believe so, and do so far believe it, that they act upon it, and run the venture of it.

Men will believe that things will be as they choose to have them, without reason, and sometimes without the appearance of reason, as is most apparent in this case. Psalm xlix. 11, "Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue forever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names."

The prepossession and desire of men to have it so, is the principal thing that makes them believe so. However, there are several other things which they use as arguments to flatter themselves. Perhaps they think with themselves, that since they are at present in health, or in youth, or that since they are useful men, do a great deal of good, and both themselves and others pray for the continuance of their lives; they are not likely to be removed by death very soon.

If they shall live many years in the world, they think that it is very probable they shall be converted before they die; as they expect hereafter to have much more convenient opportunities to become converted, than they have now. And by some means or other, they think they shall get through their work before they arrive at old age.

3. Some flatter themselves that they lead moral and orderly lives, and therefore think that they shall not be damned. They think with themselves that they live not in any vice, that they take care to wrong no man, are just and honest dealers; that they are not addicted to hard drinking, or to uncleanness, or to bad language; that they keep the Sabbath strictly, are constant attendants on the public worship, and maintain the worship of God in their families. Therefore they hope that God will not cast them into hell. They see not why God should be so angry with them as that would imply, seeing they are so orderly and regular in their walk; they see not that they have done enough to anger him to that degree. And if they have angered him, they imagine they have also done a great deal to pacify him.

If they be not as yet converted, and it be necessary that they should experience any other conversion in order to their salvation, they hope that their orderly

and strict lives will move God to give them converting grace. They hope that surely God will not see those that live as they do go to hell. Thus they flatter themselves, as those we read of, Luke xviii. 9, "that trusted in themselves that they were righteous."

4. Some make the advantages under which they live an occasion of self-flattery. They flatter themselves, because they live in a place where the gospel is powerfully preached, and among a religious people, where many have been converted; and they think it will be much easier for them to be saved on that account. Thus they abuse the grace of God to their destruction; they do that which the Scriptures call *despising the riches of God's goodness:* Rom. ii. 4, "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"

Some flatter themselves, because they are born of godly parents, who are dear to God, who have often and earnestly prayed for them, they hope that their prayers will be heard; and that encourages them to go on in the way of neglecting their souls. The Jews had great dependence upon this, that they were the children of Abraham: John viii. 33, they make their boast, "We be Abraham's seed:" and in verse 39, "Abraham is our father."

5. Some flatter themselves with their own intentions. They intend to neglect themselves and give themselves liberty for a while longer, and then to reform. Though now they neglect their souls, and are going on in sin; yet they intend erelong to bestir themselves, to leave off their sins, and to set themselves to seek God. They hear that there is a great encouragement for those who earnestly seek God, that they shall find him. So they intend to do; they propose to seek with a great deal of earnestness. They are told, that there are many who seek to enter the kingdom of heaven, who shall not be able; but they intend, not only to seek, but TO STRIVE. However, for the present they allow themselves in their ease, sloth, and pleasure, minding only earthly things.

Or if they should be seized with some mortal distemper, and should draw near to the grave, before the time which they lay out in their minds for reformation, they think how earnestly they would pray and cry to God for mercy; and as they hear God is a merciful God, who taketh no delight in the death of sinners, they hence flatter themselves that they shall move God to have pity on them.

There are but few who are sinners, and know themselves to be such, who do not encourage themselves with intentions of future repentance and reformation; but few who do not flatter themselves, that they shall in good earnest set themselves to seek God some time or other. Hell is full of GOOD INTENDERS, who never proved to be TRUE PERFORMERS: Acts xxiv. 25, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."

6. There are some who flatter themselves, that they do, and have done, a great deal for their salvation, and therefore hope they shall obtain, when indeed they neither do what they ought to do, nor what they might do in their present state of unregeneracy; nor are they in any likely way to be converted. They think they are striving, when they neglect many moral and some instituted duties; nor do they exert themselves as if it were for their lives; they are not violent for the kingdom of heaven.

There are doubtless many such; many are concerned, and are seeking, and do many things, and think that they are in a very fair way to obtain the kingdom of God; yet there is great danger that they will prove at last to be some of the foolish virgins, and be found without oil in their vessels.

7 Some hope by their strivings to obtain salvation of themselves. They

have a secret imagination, that they shall, by degrees, work in themselves sorrow and repentance of sin, and love towards God and Jesus Christ. Their striving is not so much an earnest seeking to God, as a striving to do themselves that which is the work of God. Many who are now seeking have this imagination, and labor, read, pray, hear sermons, and go to private meetings, with the view of making themselves holy, and of working in themselves holy affections.

Many, who only project and design to turn to God hereafter, are apt to think that it is an easy thing to be converted, that it is a thing which will be in their own power at any time, when they shall earnestly set themselves to it.

8. Some sinners flatter themselves, that they are already converted. They sit down and rest in a false hope, persuading themselves that all their sins are pardoned; that God loves them; that they shall go to heaven when they die; and that they need trouble themselves no more: Rev. iii. 17, "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

III. Sinners very generally go on flattering themselves in some or other of these ways, till their punishment actually overtakes them. These are the baits by which Satan catches souls, and draws them into his snare. They are such self-flatteries as these that keep men from seeing what danger they are in, and that make them go securely on in the way they are in, "as the bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life."

Those that flatter themselves with hopes of living a great while longer in the world, very commonly continue so to do till death comes. Death comes upon them when they expect it not; they look upon it as a great way off, when there is but a step between them and death. They thought not of dying at that time, nor at any time near it. When they were young, they proposed to live a good while longer; and if they happen to live till middle age, they still maintain the same thought, that they are not yet near death; and so that thought goes along with them as long as they live, or till they are just about to die.

Men often have a dependence on their own righteousness, and as long as they live are never brought off from it. Multitudes uphold themselves with their own intentions, till all their prospects are dashed in pieces by death. They put off the work which they have to do till such a time; and when that comes, they put it off to another time, until death, which cannot be put off, overtakes them. There are many also that hold a false hope, a persuasion that they belong to God; and as long as they live, by all the marks and signs which are given of a true convert, they never will be persuaded to let go their hope, till it is rent from them by death.

Thus men commonly uphold themselves, and make themselves easy, till hell-fire makes them uneasy. Everlasting ruin comes upon them as a snare, and all their hopes are at once cut off, and turned into everlasting despair. 1. Thess. v. 3, "When they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon woman with child; and they shall not escape."

APPLICATION.

1. Hence we learn one reason why there are but few saved, and why so many perish from under the gospel. All men know that they must die, and all that sit under the light of the gospel have been told many a time, that after this there is another world; that there are but two states in that other world,

a state of eternal happiness, and a state of eternal misery; that there is but one way of escaping the misery and obtaining the blessedness of eternity, which is by obtaining an interest in Christ, through faith in him; and that this life is the only opportunity of obtaining an interest in Christ. Yet men are so much given to flatter themselves in those ways which we have mentioned, that there are but few that seasonably take care of their salvation. Indeed they cannot but be in some measure concerned about their souls; yet they flatter themselves with one thing or other, so that they are kept steadily and uninterruptedly going on in the broad way to destruction.

2. Hence we learn the reason why awakening truths of Scripture, and awakening sermons, make no more impression upon men. It is in itself a wonderful and surprising thing, that God's denunciations of eternal misery, and threatenings of casting sinners into the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone forever and ever, do not affect them, do not startle them. But the truth is, they flatter themselves, by such means as we have mentioned, that this dreadful misery is not for them; that they shall escape it, though multitudes of others are involved in it. They take not these threatenings to themselves; they seem to think that they do not belong to them.

How many are there in this congregation, who, for all the awakening sermons they have heard, are yet secure in sin! And who, although they are sensible that they are in a Christless condition, and are still going on in sin, yet intend to go to heaven, and expect that by some means or other they shall arrive there. They are often told, that God is very angry with them; yet they think God is a very merciful God, and they shall be able to pacify him. If they be told how uncertain life is, that doth not awaken them, because they flatter themselves with long life. If they be told how dangerous it is to delay the business of religion, they promise themselves, that they will hereafter engage in it with more earnestness than others, and so obtain the end, the salvation of their souls. Others, when they are told that many shall seek who shall not be able to obtain, think surely, that they, having done so much for salvation, shall not be denied.

3. Let every sinner examine himself, whether he do not flatter himself in some of those ways which have been mentioned. What is it in your own minds which makes you think it is safe for you to delay turning to God? What is it that encourages you to run such a venture as you do by delaying this necessary work? Is it that you hope there is no such state as heaven or hell, and have a suspicion that there is no God? Is it that makes you secure? Or is it that you are not much afraid but that you shall have opportunity enough a great while hence to mind such things? Is it an intention of a future seeking a more convenient season? And are you persuaded that God will hearken to you then, after you shall have so long turned a deaf ear to his commands and gracious invitations? Are you encouraged to commit sin, because you hope to repent of it? Are you encouraged by the mercy of God to be his enemies? And do you resolve still to provoke him to anger, because you think he is easily pacified?

Or do you think that your conversion is in your own power, and that you can turn to God when you please? Is it because you have been born of godly parents that you are so secure? Or do you imagine that you are in a fair way to be converted? Do you think that what you have done in religion will engage God to pity you, and that he never can have the heart to condemn one who has lived in so orderly a manner? Or do you think that you are indeed converted already? And doth that encourage you to take a liberty in sinning? Or are you secure, because you are so stupid as to think nothing about these

things? Do you let these concerns wholly alone, and scarcely ever think at all how it will be with you after you are dead?

Certainly it must be one or more of these things which keeps you in your security, and encourages you to go on in sin. Examine, therefore, and see which of them it is.

4. By the text and doctrine be persuaded to leave off thus flattering yourselves in your own eyes. You are therein informed, that those who do as you do commonly continue so doing till their punishment actually comes upon them. Thereby you may be convinced of the vanity of all such flatteries. Be afraid of that which you are sure is the devil's bait. "Surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird," Prov. i. 17.

You are not only told in the Scriptures, that sinners are generally thus allured to hell, but your own reason may convince you that it is so. For doubtless other sinners have as much ground to hope to escape punishment as you; and it is evident, that they generally do hope to escape. Men under the gospel almost universally think they shall not go to hell: if it were otherwise, they could have no peace or comfort in the world. Yet what multitudes have we reason to conclude go down from under the preaching of the gospel to the pit of destruction! Now, this is surely enough to convince any sober, prudent person of the folly of such flattery, and of the folly of every one that doth not immediately set about his great work with his might. If you could have access to the damned, you would hear many of them curse themselves, for thus flattering themselves while they lived in this world; and you would have the same doctrine preached to you by their wailings and yellings which is now preached to you from the pulpit.

If your temptation to security be unbelief of the fundamental doctrines of religion, such as the being of God, of another world, and an eternal judgment, you may consider, that though that makes you secure at present, yet it will not do always, it will not stand by when you come to die. The fool often in health saith, *There is no God;* but when he comes to die, he cannot rest in any such supposition. Then he is generally so much convinced in his own conscience, that there is a God, that he is in dreadful amazement for fear of his eternal wrath. It is folly, therefore, to flatter yourselves with any supposition now which you will not then be able to hold.

If you depend on long life, consider how many who have depended on the same thing, and had as much reason to depend on it as you, have died within your remembrance.

Is it because you are outwardly of an orderly life and conversation, that you think you shall be saved? How unreasonable is it to suppose, that God should be so obliged by those actions, which he knows are not done from the least respect or regard to him, but wholly with a private view! Is it because you are under great advantages that you are not much afraid but that you shall some time or other be converted, and therefore neglect yourselves and your spiritual interests? And were not the people of Bethsaida, Chorazin and Capernaum, under as great advantages as you, when Christ himself preached the gospel to them, almost continually, and wrought such a multitude of miracles among them? Yet he says, that it shall be more tolerable in the day of judgment for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for those cities.

Do you expect you shall be saved, however you neglect yourselves, because you were born of godly parents? Hear what Christ saith, Matt. iii. 9: "Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father." Do you flatter yourselves that you shall obtain mercy, though others do not, because you in-

tend hereafter to seek it more earnestly than others? Yet you deceive yourselves, if you think that you intend better than many of those others, or better than many who are now in hell once intended.

If you think you are in a way of earnest seeking, consider, whether or no you do not mind other things yet more. If you imagine that you have it in your own power to work yourselves up to repentance, consider, that you must assuredly give up that imagination before you can have repentance wrought in you. If you think yourselves already converted, and that encourages you to give yourselves the greater liberty in sinning, this is a certain sign that you are not converted.

Wherefore abandon all these ways of flattering yourselves; no longer follow the devil's bait; and let nothing encourage you to go on in sin; but immediately and henceforth seek God with all your heart, and soul, and strength.

SERMON XVII.

THE WARNINGS OF SCRIPTURE ARE IN THE BEST MANNER ADAPTED TO THE AWAKENING AND CONVERSION OF SINNERS.

LUKE xvi. 31.—And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

WE here have an account how the rich man in hell—after he had in vain begged of Abraham to send Lazarus to his relief—prays that Lazarus may be sent to his brethren to warn them, that they might take care for their salvation, and escape that place of torment. By the way, it may be proper to remark, that we cannot from this conclude, that the damned will have any workings of natural affection to their near relations in this world, or any concern for their salvation. The design of Christ was only parabolically to represent what different thoughts worldly and wicked men will have of things, when in hell, from what they have while upon earth. The rich man, when he was upon earth, only minded his honor, ease, and pleasure, and did not think it worth while to take care of his soul, and to be at much pains to escape hell. But now he is of another mind, and is sensible that if his five brethren, who live in the same careless neglect of their souls as he did, knew what hell is, they would take more care.

But this seems to be put into the parable chiefly to introduce what follows, the reply which Abraham made to him, *They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them.* As much as to say, They have already abundant warning and instruction, which God himself hath provided for them, let them make use of that.

The rich man replies, *Nay, father Abraham, but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.* Then come in the words of the text, *And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.* By Moses and the prophets is meant the whole Old Testament, which was the whole canon of Scripture which they had in those times. The hearing of them implies, attending to what they say, believing them, and obeying them—*they would not be persuaded*—that is, they would not be persuaded to take thorough care of their souls, to forsake their sins and turn to God, so as to avoid this place of torments—*though one rose from the dead;* though one should go from the invisible world, either from heaven, where they see the torments of the damned, or from hell, where they feel them.

DOCTRINE.

The warnings of God's word are more fitted to obtain the ends of awakening sinners, and bringing them to repentance, than the rising of one from the dead to warn them.

In this passage, Moses and the prophets seem not only to be equalized to the warnings of one from the invisible world, but to be preferred before them. They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them: they have already those means which God in his infinite wisdom hath seen to be fittest for them, and more suitable to their nature and circumstances, than the rising of one from the dead. But whether there can be any more than an equality necessarily in-

ferred or not; yet if only the warnings of the Old Testament have an equal tendency to bring men to repentance, as the rising of one from the dead; then surely these, together with the much clearer revelation under the gospel-dispensation by Christ and his apostles—wherein we are abundantly more plainly told of another world, and wherein life and immortality are brought to light—must have a much greater tendency and fitness to obtain these ends.

Sinners are apt to find fault with the means of grace which they enjoy, and to say with themselves, If I had ever seen hell, or had ever heard the cries of the damned, or had ever seen a person who had felt hell-torments, or had seen them at a distance, that would awaken me; then I would forsake all my sins, and would do whatever I could to escape hell. But now I am only told of hell in the Bible and by ministers; and there never was any in this world that saw or felt it: so that I am ready to think it is mere delusion and fancy. How do I know that there is any hell? How do I know but that when I die there will be an end of me?

But it is the indisposition of sinners to this great work, to which they are directed, which makes them find fault with their means and advantages. The slothful and negligent, who hate to bestir themselves, are they who object "The way of the slothful is as a hedge of thorns."—Sinners know not what they would have. They are fixedly averse to breaking off their sins by righteousness; and to make the matter the more excusable, they object against the sufficiency of their means, and so they will not believe, except they see hell, or see some person who has seen it.

But God, who knows our nature and circumstances, knows what is most adapted to them. He who made the faculties of our souls, knows what will have the greatest tendency to move them, and to work upon them. He who is striving with us, to bring us to repentance and salvation, uses the fittest and best means. In contriving and appointing the means of our salvation, he chooses better for us than we should for ourselves.

Suppose a person should rise from the dead to warn sinners, either from heaven, where they see the misery of the damned, or from hell, where they feel it; and should tell how dismal those torments are, having seen or felt them; and suppose he should confirm what he said, by declaring that he had seen the smoke of their torments, the raging of the flames, the dreadful crew of devils and damned souls together, and had heard their dismal cries and shrieks; or suppose he should say that he had felt them, and should express by words and actions the doleful state of the damned and the extremity of their torments; this would probably greatly fright and terrify many sinners who were not terrified by reading the Bible, nor by hearing preaching about hell-torments. But it would be very much because of the unusualness and strangeness of the thing. Men are apt to be much affected with strange things, and to be much affrighted by spectres in the dark, because they are unusual. But if they were as common as preaching is, they would lose their effect.

It might be that on such an unusual occasion, as the rising of one from the dead, for a while men would reform their lives, and possibly some might be so affected as never to forget it. But we are to consider which would have the greatest tendency to awaken us, if both were alike new and unusual, to be warned of the misery of hell by the great God himself, declaring as it were from heaven how dreadful hell is, and abundantly warning us about it; or to be warned only by a man coming from the invisible world, who had either seen or felt these miseries. It is in this view that we shall consider the matter; and we shall show what advantages the former mode of warning has above the lat

ter: or how the warnings of God's word have a greater tendency to awaken sinners and bring them to repentance, than the rising of one from the dead to warn them.

1. God, in many respects, knows better what belongs to the punishment of sinners than departed souls. Departed souls doubtless know what hell-torments are, much better than any on earth. The souls of the wicked feel them, and the souls of the saints see them afar off. God glorifies his justice in the punishment of ungodly men, in the view of the saints and angels, and thereby makes them the more admire the riches of his goodness in choosing them to life. As the rich man saw Lazarus in heaven afar off, so Lazarus saw the rich man in hell; he saw hell-torments; and therefore the rich man desires he may be sent to warn his brethren.—And if one should rise from the dead to warn wicked men, if it would at all awaken them, it would be because he knew what hell-torments were by his own knowledge, and could describe them to others, as having seen and felt them.

But surely the all-seeing God knows as well as any of the dead, what the present sufferings of the damned are. He is everywhere present with his all-seeing eye. He is in heaven and in hell, and in and through every part of the creation. He is where every devil is; and where every damned soul is, he is present by his knowledge and his essence. He not only knows as well as those in heaven, who see at a distance; but he knows as perfectly as those who feel the misery. He seeth into the innermost recesses of the hearts of those miserable spirits. He seeth all the sorrow and anguish that are there; for he upholds them in being. They and all the powers of their spirits, whereby they are capable of either happiness or misery, are in his hands.

Besides, it is his wrath they endure; he measures out to them their several portions of punishment; he makes his wrath enter into them; he is a consuming fire to them; his anger is that fire, in which they are tormented. He therefore is doubtless able to give us as clear and distinct, and as true, an account of hell, as the damned themselves, if they should rise from the dead. He needs not any to inform him.

He knows far better what the eternity of those torments is than any of them. He can better tell us how awful a thing eternity is. He knows better what the future judgments of sinners will be, when the Lord Jesus shall come in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel. He knows far better than they how much the torment of the wicked will then be increased.

2. We have the truth upon surer grounds from God's testimony, than we could have it from the testimony of one rising from the dead. Suppose one should rise from the dead, and tell us of the dreadfulness of hell-torments; how precarious a foundation would that be to build upon, in a matter of such importance, unless we consider it as confirmed by divine testimony. We should be uncertain whether there were not some delusion in the case. We know that it is impossible for God to lie; and we may know that the matter is just as he declares it to us. But if one should come from the dead, we could not be so sure that we were no way imposed upon. We could not be so sure that he who testified was not himself subject to some delusion. We could not be sure that the matter was not strained too high, and represented greater than it really is.

One coming from the dead could not, merely by force of his own testimony, make us sure that we should come to that place of torments if we did not repent and reform. And if there should come more witnesses than one from the dead, if there should be ever so many, yet there is no authority equal to that of God:

there is no testimony of spirits from the invisible world which would be so indisputable and unquestionable as the divine testimony. How could we know, unless by some divine revelation, that they who should come from the dead had not come to deceive us? How could we know how wicked or how good they were, and upon what views they acted?

Whereas we have the greatest ground to be assured, that the First Being, and the fountain of all being and perfection, is nothing but light and truth itself, and therefore that it is impossible he should deceive or be deceived.

3. The warnings of God's word have greatly the advantage, by reason of the greatness and majesty of him who speaks. The speeches and declarations of those who are great, excellent, and honorable, have a greater tendency to move the affections, than the declarations of others who are less excellent. Things spoken by a king affect more than the same things spoken by a mean man.

But God is infinitely greater than kings; he is universal King of heaven and earth, the absolute Sovereign of all things. Now, what can have a greater tendency to strike the mind and move the heart, than to be warned by this great and glorious Being? Shall we be unmoved when he speaks who made heaven and earth by the word of his power? If his immediate speeches, declarations, and warnings, will not influence us, what will? Isa. i. 2, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken."—That is to the present purpose which we have in Matt. xxi. 37, "But last of all he sent his son, saying, They will reverence my son." He sent his servants before, but they did not regard them. He therefore sent his son, who was a much greater and more honorable messenger, and said, Surely they will regard him.

What if God shold send messengers from the dead to warn us, even many in succession, and men should reject them; we should justly argue, that it would have a much greater tendency to make men regard and obey the counsel, if he would send his Son, or come himself. But God hath sent his Son, and therein he hath come himself. He came down from heaven, and took upon him our nature, and dwelt among us, teaching and warning us concerning hell and damnation.

In the Bible, we not only have those warnings which were given by inspiration of the prophets, but we have God's own words, which he spake as it were by his own mouth. In the Old Testament is his voice out of the midst of the fire and the darkness, from mount Sinai; and in the New Testament, we have God speaking to us, as dwelling among us. He came down from heaven, and instructed us in a familiar manner for a long while; and we have his instructions recorded in our Bibles.—Now, which has the greatest tendency to influence men, to have one of the departed spirits sent back into its body to warn them, or to have God himself assume a body and warn them?

4. It more evidently shows the importance of the affair, that God should immediately concern himself in it, than the coming of one from the dead would do. Those things about which kings most immediately concern themselves are commonly matters of the greatest importance, while they leave less concernments to be managed by their officers. And surely that must be a matter of very great moment, in which God shows himself so much concerned as he does in our salvation. God, in all ages of the world, hath showed himself very much concerned in this matter. How abundantly hath he warned us in his holy word! How earnest hath he shown himself in it! How many arguments and expostulations hath he used, that we might avoid the way to hell!—This evidently argues, that what we are warned about is a matter of the utmost con-

cern, and proves it much more than if we were only warned by one risen from the dead.

5. God warning us of our danger of damnation hath a greater tendency to have influence upon us, because he is our Judge. Damnation is a punishment to which he condemns and which he inflicts. What he warns us of is his own wrath and vengeance. In his word we have his threatenings against sin denounced by himself. He tells us, that if we go on in sin, he will destroy us, and cast us out of his sight, and pour his wrath upon us, and hold us eternally under misery. He tells us so himself; and this hath a much greater tendency to influence us, than to be told so by another, who is not to be our judge, who hath not in his hands the power of making us miserable.—When a king immediately threatens his own displeasure, it has a greater tendency to terrify men, than when another man threatens it, or warns them of the danger.

6. God is infinitely wise, and knows better how to speak to us so as to persuade us, than one risen from the dead. He perfectly knows our nature and state, and knows how to adapt his instructions and warnings to our frame and circumstances in the world; and without doubt that method which God has chosen, is agreeable to his infinite wisdom, and most adapted to our nature.

If one should come from hell to warn sinners, it may be he would tell them of hell in such a manner as would have more of a tendency to drive men into despair, and set them a blaspheming as they do in hell, than to excite them to strive for salvation, and diligently to use the means which God hath appointed But God knoweth what revelation of hell we can bear, and what hath the most tendency to do us good in this our infirm, dark, and sinful state.—The declarations of one come from hell might more tend to drive us from God than to bring us near to him. It is best for us to be warned and instructed by God, who knows best how to do it.

These are some of the reasons why the warnings of God's word have more of a tendency to bring us to repentance, than the warning of one risen from the dead.

APPLICATION.

1. It is a natural inference from this doctrine, that if these means which God hath appointed do not answer to lead men to repentance and reformation, no others would.—Although this be not an absolutely necessary consequence from the words of the doctrine; yet it seems to be Christ's aim to teach us, that if God's means will not answer, none will. Our own means, those which we can devise, however they may seem more likely at a distance to be effectual, if brought to the trial, will not prove to be better. The rich man thought that if his brethren were warned by one rising from the dead, they would surely repent. But Abraham tells him, he is mistaken.

If one rising from the dead would not answer the purpose, we may rationally conclude that no other kind of means different from these appointed by God, would. For what can we think of, which seems to have more tendency to awaken men, and lead to repentance, than one coming from the dead to them; except those means which we enjoy.—Indeed men can think of many means, which they may imagine, if they enjoyed them, would make them believe and repent: but they deceive themselves.

It may be they think, if they could see some prophet, and see him work miracles, that this would awaken them. But how was it then when there were prophets? There has rarely been a more degenerate time than that of Elijah

and Elisha, who wrought so many miracles. The people did not regard their prophecies nor their miracles; but walked in their own ways, and served their own gods, so that Elijah thought there was none left of the true worshippers of God. And how did they treat the prophet Jeremiah, solemnly warning them from God of their approaching destruction! And how often do the prophets complain that all their prophecies and warnings were neglected and despised!

Would it be sufficient if you could hear God speak from heaven? How was it in Moses's time, when they heard God speak out of the midst of the fire, and heard the voice of words exceeding loud and full of majesty, so that they exceedingly trembled; when they saw mount Sinai all covered with smoke, and shaking exceedingly? How did they behave themselves? Did they all turn from their sins, and after that walk in the ways of God? It is true, they were very much affected at first, while it was a new and strange thing to them; but how hard-hearted and rebellious were they soon after! They did not scruple to rebel against this same great and glorious God. Yea, they made a golden calf while Moses was in the mount conversing with God, just after they had seen those dreadful appearances of divine majesty.

Thus they rebelled against the Lord, although they had seen so many miracles and wonders in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness; although they continually saw the pillar of cloud and of fire going before them, were continually fed in a miraculous manner with manna, and in the same miraculous manner made to drink water out of the rock.

Men are apt to think, that if they had lived in Christ's time, and had seen and heard him, and had seen his miracles, that they would have effectually convinced and turned them from sin. But how was it in fact? How few were there brought to repentance by all his discourses and miracles! How hard-hearted were they! Some were very much affected for a little while; but how few constant steady followers had he! He was, notwithstanding his miracles, rejected, despised, and even murdered by the people among whom he dwelt. And they were men of the same natures as sinners in these days.

The Scripture is full of instances, sufficient to convince us, that if the word of God will not awaken and convert sinners, nothing will.—And we see enough in these days to convince us of it. Men sometimes meet with those things by which we should not imagine, if we did not see it, and were not used to it, but that they would be thoroughly awakened and reformed.—They sometimes hear the warnings of dying men expecting to go to hell. One would think this would be enough to awaken them; and it may be they are affected with it for the present: but it only touches them; it vanishes away, and is gone like a puff of wind.

Sometimes sinners themselves are laid upon beds of sickness, and their lives hang in doubt before them. They are brought to the sides of the grave, and to the very mouth of hell, and their hearts are full of terror and amazement. Yet if they recover, they soon forget it, and return to the ways of folly and wickedness.—Sometimes this is repeated; they are taken sick again, and are again in extreme peril of death, their hearts are full of amazement, and they make many promises and vows; yet being recovered, they again soon forget all, and return to sin and folly. Such things are enough to convince us, that if the word of God be not sufficient to convince men, and make them break off their sins, no external means would be sufficient.

Perhaps some may yet be ready to think, that if sinners should see hell, and hear the cries of the damned, that would be effectual, though nothing else would But if we duly consider the matter, we shall see reason to think, that it would

not have so great a tendency to turn men from sin, as the word of God. Such a thing would doubtless be effectual to terrify and affright men, and probably to death. Such a means is not suitable to our nature and state in the world. If it should not fright men to death, it would not have so great a tendency to make them diligently use means for their salvation as the warnings of Scripture. It would probably drive them to despair; or so take way their spirits that they would have no heart to seek God. Instead of driving them to God, it would probably make them hate him the more. It would make them more like devils; and set them a blaspheming as the damned do. For while the hearts of men are filled with natural darkness, they cannot see the glory of the divine justice appearing in such extreme torments.

Therefore the means which God hath instituted for us, are doubtless the best, and most conducive to lead men to repentance and salvation. They are doubtless far better than any other which we can devise.

2. Hence we learn the dreadful hardness of men's hearts, since the word of God hath no more influence upon them, and they are no more moved and wrought upon by those means which infinite wisdom hath provided. The warnings of the word of God are, as you have heard, better and more powerful means than if one should rise from the dead to warn us, and tell us our danger, and the dreadfulness of the wrath of God. You have also heard, that if these means will not answer the end of awakening and leading sinners to repentance, no other will; neither the working of miracles, nor the hearing of God speak with an audible voice from heaven, nor any thing else.—Yet how few are there who are effectually wrought upon by the word of God! They are very thinly sown; there is but here and there one.

When we read how the children of Israel conducted themselves in the wilderness, how often they murmured and offended; we are ready to wonder at the hardness of their hearts. And when we read the history of Christ, and how the Jews hated and rejected him notwithstanding his many miracles; we are ready to wonder how they could be so hard-hearted. But we have as much reason to wonder at ourselves, for we have naturally the same sort of hearts that they had; and sinners in these days manifest a hardness of heart as much to be wondered at, in that they are not influenced by the word of God; for they who will not hear Moses and the prophets, Jesus Christ and his apostles, neither would be persuaded, if one should rise from the dead, or if an angel should come from heaven.

The best means of awakening and conversion are plentifully enjoyed by us, much more plentifully in several respects, than they were by those who had only Moses and the prophets. In the first place, we have divine truth more fully revealed in the Bible than they had then. Light now shines abundantly clear. Gospel truth is revealed, not in types and shadows, but plainly. Heaven and hell are much more clearly and expressly made known. We are told, that the glory of that revelation was no glory in comparison with the revelation of the gospel.

Again, we have a greater plenty of Bibles than they had under the dispensation of Moses and the prophets. Then there was no such thing as printing, and Bibles were scarce things. They seldom had any Bibles any where else but in their synagogues. But now we have them in our houses; we can look into them when we please. Besides Christ hath appointed the gospel ministry, by which we have the word of God explained and enforced every week. Yet how little influence hath the word of God to bring men to repentance!

Let this strike conviction into those who never yet have found any such

effect by the word of God. Though you are convinced of nothing else, yet you have abundant reason to be convinced that your hearts are as hard as a stone, and that you are exceedingly stupid and sottish.

3. Hence we may learn how justly and fairly God deals with us. He gives us the best means of awakening and reclaiming us from our sins; better than if he had sent one from the dead to warn us. He gives us those means which are most suited to our nature and circumstances. He gives sinners abundant warning before he punishes them. What could he have done more than he hath done? We can devise or imagine no sort of warning which would have been better than what God hath given us. How justly therefore are ungodly men punished! how inexcusable will they be!

4. Let all make use of the means which God hath instituted. They are the best and only means by which we may expect to obtain salvation. We shall be most inexcusable therefore if we neglect them. Let us attend to the word of God, read and hear it carefully, consider it thoroughly, and daily walk by it. Let us be diligent in this work. The word of God is a great price put into our hands to get wisdom and eternal salvation; let us therefore improve it while we have it, as we know not how soon we may be deprived of it; lest Christ say to us, as in Luke xix. 42, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes.

SERMON XVIII.

THE UNREASONABLENESS OF INDETERMINATION IN RELIGION.

1 Kings xviii. 21.—And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

It is the manner of God, before he bestows any signal or remarkable mercy on a people, first to prepare them for it; and before he removes any awful judgments which he hath brought upon them for their sins, first to cause them to forsake those sins which procured those judgments. We have an instance of this in the chapter wherein is the text.

It was a time of sore famine in Israel. There had been neither rain nor dew for the space of three years and six months. This famine was brought upon the land for their idolatry. But God was now about to remove this judgment; and therefore, to prepare them for it, sent Elijah to convince them of the folly of idolatry, and to bring them to repentance of it.—In order to this, Elijah, by the command of the Lord, goes and shows himself to Ahab, and directs him to send and gather all Israel to him at Mount Carmel, and all the prophets of Baal, four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves that ate at Jezebel's table, four hundred, that they might determine the matter and bring the controversy to an issue, whether Jehovah or Baal were God.—To this end, Elijah proposes, that each should take a bullock, that he should take one, and the prophets of Baal another, that each should cut his bullock in pieces, lay it on the wood, and put no fire under; and that the God who should answer by fire should be concluded to be God.

The text contains an account of what Elijah said to all the people at their first meeting, and of their silence: "And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." To which the people, it seems, made no reply. In these words, we may observe,

1. How Elijah expostulates with the people about their halting so long between two opinions; in which expostulation may be observed,

(1.) What the two opinions were, between which they halted, viz., whether the Lord were God, or whether Baal were God. The case in Israel seems to have been this; there were some who were altogether for Baal, and wholly rejected the true God; of which number, to be sure, were Jezebel and the prophets of Baal. And there were some among them, who were altogether for the God of Israel, and wholly rejected Baal; as God told Elijah, that "he had yet left in Israel seven thousand that had not bowed the knee to Baal, and whose mouths had not kissed him," 1 Kings xix. 18.

But the rest of the people halted between two opinions. They saw that some were for one, and some for the other, and they did not know which to choose; and, as is commonly the case when difference of opinion prevails, there were many who had no religion at all; they were not settled in any thing; the different opinions prevalent in Israel distracted and confounded them.—Many who professed to believe in the true God, were yet very cold and indifferent, and many were wavering and unsettled. They saw that the king and queen were for Baal; and Baal's party was the prevailing party; but their forefathers had

been for the Lord; and they knew not which was right. Thus they halted between two opinions.

(2.) In this expostulation is implied the unreasonableness of their thus halting between two opinions: "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." Which implies that they ought to determine one way or the other.

2. We may observe their silence on this occasion: "And the people answered him not a word," as being convicted in their own consciences of the unreasonableness of their being for so long a time wavering and unresolved: they had nothing to reply in excuse for themselves.

DOCTRINE.

The unresolvedness of many persons in religion is very unreasonable.

I. PROP. Many persons remain exceedingly undetermined with respect to the things of religion. They are very much undetermined in themselves whether to embrace religion or to reject it.—Many who are baptized, and make a profession of religion, and seem to be Christians, are yet in their own minds halting between two opinions: they never yet came fully to a conclusion whether to be Christians or not. They are taught the Christian religion in their childhood, and have the Bible, the word preached, and the means of grace all their days, yet continue, and grow up, and many grow old, in an unresolvedness, whether to embrace Christianity or not; and many continue unresolved as long as they live.

1. There are some persons who have never come to a settled determination in their own minds, whether or no there be any truth in religion. They hear of the things of religion from their childhood all their days; but never come to a conclusion in their own minds, whether they be real or fabulous. Particularly, some have never come to any determination in their own minds, whether there be any such thing as conversion. They hear much talk about it, and know that many pretend to be the subjects of it; but they are never resolved whether all be not mere designed hypocrisy and imposture, or the mere notions of whimsical persons.

Some never come to any determination whether the Scriptures be the word of God, or whether they be the invention of men; and whether the story concerning Jesus Christ be any thing but a fable. They fear it is true, but sometimes very much doubt of it. Sometimes, when they hear arguments for it, they give an assent to it, that it is true; but upon every little objection or temptation arising, they call it in question; and are always wavering and never settled about it.

So it seems to have been with many of the Jews in Christ's time; they were always at a loss what to make of him, whether he were indeed the Christ, or whether he were Elias, or one of the old prophets, or a mere impostor. John x. 24, 25, "Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not."—Some have never so much as come to a resolution in their own minds, whether there be a God or not. They know not that there is, and oftentimes very much doubt of it.

2. There are some who never have come to any determination in their own minds whether to embrace religion in the practice of it. Religion consists not merely, or chiefly in theory or speculation, but in practice. It is a practical thing; the end of it is to guide and influence us in our practice; and consider-

ed in this view, there are multitudes who never have come to a conclusion whether to embrace religion or not.—It is probably pretty general for men to design to be religious some time or other before they die; for none intend to go to hell. But they still keep it at a distance; they put it off from time to time, and never come to any conclusion which determines them in their present practice. And some never so much as fix upon any time. They design to be religious some time before they die, but they know not when.

There are many who have always hitherto continued unresolved about the necessity of striving and being earnestly engaged for salvation. They flatter themselves that they may obtain salvation, though they be not so earnestly engaged; though they mind the world and their worldly affairs more than their salvation. They are often told how necessary it is that they make haste and not delay, that they do whatever their hand findeth to do with their might, that they be violent, that a dull, slack way of seeking salvation is never like to be effectual. But of these things they are never thoroughly convinced. Some seem to resolve to be in earnest, and seem to set out with some engagedness of mind; but soon fail, because they have never been fully convinced of the necessity of it.

Many have never come to a determination what to choose for their portion. There are but two things which God offers to mankind for their portion. One is this world, with the pleasures and profits of sin, together with eternal misery ensuing: the other is heaven and eternal glory, with a life of self-denial and respect to all the commands of God preceding. Many, as long as they live, come to no settled determination which of these to choose. They must have one or the other, they cannot have both; but they always remain in suspense, and never make their choice.

They would fain have heaven and this world too; they would have salvation and the pleasures and profits of sin too. But considering heaven and the world, as God offers them, they will have neither. God offers heaven, only with the self-denial and difficulty which are in the way to it; and they are not willing to have heaven on these conditions. God offers the world and the pleasures of sin to men not alone, but with eternal misery in connection with them; and so neither are they willing to have the world. They would fain divide heaven from the holiness and self-denial which are the way to it, and from the holiness which reigns in it, and then they would be glad to have heaven. They would fain divide sin from hell, and then they would fully determine forever to cleave to sin.

But God will not make such a division for them. They must have one or the other of these for their portion, as God offers; and therefore they never make any choice at all.—Indeed they do practically and in effect choose sin and hell. But they do not come to any resolution in their *own minds* which they will have for their portion, whether heaven and holiness, or the world and hell: they are always wavering and halting between two opinions. Sometimes they seem to determine for the one, and sometimes for the other. In times wherein they meet with no difficulty or temptation, and can, as they say, do their duty without hurting themselves, or much crossing their carnal inclinations, they seem to choose heaven and holiness. At other times, wherein they meet with difficulty in the way of duty, and great temptations of worldly profits or pleasures are laid before them, then they choose the world, and let heaven and holiness alone.—There are among us vast multitudes, before whom these two things have been set hundreds of times, who have never to this day come to a determination which to have.

So they have never yet determined which shall be their master, whether God or mammon. There are but few who have undertaken the service of God, and are come to a resolution and preparedness of mind to serve God and follow Christ at all times, and to whatever difficulties it may expose them. Yet at the same time neither are they determined that they will continue to serve Satan: they are afraid to draw up such a conclusion. Thus many spend away their lives without making their choice, putting that off, though they do in the mean time practically choose the service of Satan. These are the persons of whom the Apostle James speaks in chap. i. 8, "The double-minded man is unstable in all his ways."

II. To continue thus undetermined and unresolved in the things of religion, is very unreasonable, and that upon the following accounts.

1. The things of religion are things wherein we are to the highest degree interested. The truth or falsehood of the doctrines of religion concerns us to the highest degree possible. It is no matter of indifference to us whether there be a God or not; or whether the Scriptures be the word of God; or whether Christ be the Son of God; or whether there be any such thing as conversion. It makes infinite odds to us whether these things be so or not. Therefore we are under the greatest obligation in point of interest to resolve in our minds whether they be true or false. They who are undetermined whether there be any truth in religion, and are contented to be so, not inquiring, nor thoroughly using the means to be determined, act very unreasonably. They remain in doubt whether there be any such thing as a heaven or hell; are quiet and easy to continue ignorant in this matter; are not engaged in their minds to come to a determination; do not search and inquire what arguments there are to prove any such things; nor diligently weigh and consider the force of them; but busy their minds about other things of infinitely less importance; and act as if they thought it did not much concern them, whether there be a future and eternal state.

If they think that there is not, yet it is a matter of so great importance, that no wise man would rest until he had satisfied himself; because if there be such a future state as the Scriptures tell us of, then we must have our part in it, either in a state of eternal rewards, or in a state of eternal punishment. So it is no matter of indifference to us what we have for our portion, whether this world with hell, or a life of holiness and self-denial with heaven. These opposite portions relate not merely to a few days in this world, but they relate to eternity. It is infinite madness therefore not to come to a determination.

So it is no matter of indifference what master we serve, whether God or mammon; or what interest we will pursue, whether our temporal or eternal interest; or which we prefer, the commands of God, or our pleasures, our ease and convenience. Doubtless it will make a vast odds one way or the other. We ought therefore to come to some determination which we will choose.

2. God hath made us reasonable creatures, and capable of rationally determining for ourselves. God hath made us capable of good acquaintance with those things which do especially concern our interest. Doubtless God hath made man capable of discovering the truth in matters of religion, of coming to a good determination in these questions, whether the Scriptures be the word of God, whether there be a future state, and the like. The resolution of these questions, which it so much concerns us to determine, is not above our capacities. God hath not set these things beyond the extent of our faculties.

So God hath made us capable of making a wise choice for ourselves, as to the life which we shall choose to lead. He hath given man so much understanding, as to make him capable of determining which is best; to lead a life

of self-denial and enjoy eternal happiness, or to take our swing in sinful enjoyments and burn in hell forever. The question is of no difficult determination. It is so far from being a matter too hard for our reason, that the reason of a child is sufficient to determine this matter. Therefore men in remaining undetermined in these matters, do not act as reasonable creatures, but make themselves like "the horse and the mule, which have no understanding," Psalm xxxii. 9.

3. God puts into our hands a happy opportunity to determine for ourselves. What better opportunity can a man desire to consult his own interest, than to have liberty to choose his own portion? God setteth life and death before us Deut. xxx. 19, "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that thou and thy seed after thee may live." See also Ezek. xviii. 31, 32, and chap. xxxiii. 11. What better opportunity can we desire for securing to ourselves the greatest good, than to have eternal life and unchangeable happiness set before us, and offered to our choice? Therefore those who neglect coming to a resolution, act unreasonably, because they stand so much in their own light, and miss so glorious an opportunity.

4. The things among which we are to make our choice are but few in number; there are but two portions set before us, one of which must be our portion; either life or death, either blessing or cursing; either a life of universal and persevering obedience with eternal glory; or a worldly, carnal, wicked life, with eternal misery. If there were many terms in the offer made us, many things of nearly an equal value, one of which we must choose, to remain long in suspense and undetermined would be more excusable; there would be more reason for long deliberation before we should fix. But there are but two terms, there are but two states in another world, in one or the other of which we must be fixed to all eternity.

And there are but two states in this world, a state of sin, and a state of holiness, a natural state, and a converted state. There is but one way in which we can come to life, which renders the determination of reason much the easier. There are but two masters, to one of which we must be reputed the servants, Baal and Jehovah, God and mammon. There are but two competitors for the possession of us, Christ and the devil. There are but two paths, in one of which you are to travel, either in the strait and narrow way which leadeth unto life, or the broad way which leadeth unto destruction.

This shows the unreasonableness of those who live under light, and have the offers of the gospel made to them, and yet remain from year to year unfixed and undetermined, halting between two opinions.

5. God hath given us all needed helps to determine us. We have all needed helps to determine our understandings, as to the truth of the things of religion, as whether there be a God, whether the Scriptures be the word of God, whether there be a future state, &c. We are not left in the dark as to these things, as the poor heathen are, who are under great disadvantages to come to the knowledge of the truth, though they be not under an impossibility, for *they may haply feel after God and find him*, Acts xvii. 27. But we have a clear sunshine to guide us, we have a particular description of those things which are set before us for truth, and have great opportunity to examine them. The Scripture lies open before us, and all the doctrines of the gospel are particularly set forth, with the reasons on which their evidence is founded. We may search and try their force and sufficiency, as we will.

We have great helps to a wise and rational determination in our choice; to

determine whether it be best for us to choose a life of sin or a life of holiness, the service of God or the service of Baal. We have very plainly set before us the advantages of both sides; the loss and gain are particularly stated. Christ hath dealt by us faithfully, and hath told us what we shall get, and what we shall lose, by being his followers. He hath also told us what we shall get, and what we shall lose by a life of sin. He hath not dealt by us deceitfully. He hath not pretended greater advantages in godliness than there really are, nor greater disadvantages or dangers in sin. John xiv. 2, "In my Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you."

He hath told us plainly that we must take up the cross daily and follow him; that we must hate father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, and our own life also, in order to become his disciples; and that we must cut off our right hands, and pluck out our right eyes, in order to enter into heaven. Thus we have a fair opportunity to count the cost on both sides, and are directed so to do, Luke xiv. 28. How unreasonable therefore is it for men who have all these helps and advantages, to remain in suspense, and to come to no conclusion whether they will be Christians or heathens, whether they will be for God or the devil; though they have lived under the preaching of the word and offers of the gospel for many years.

6. We have no reason to expect to be under better advantages to determine hereafter than we are now. We never shall have a clearer revelation of gospel truth; never shall have the advantages and disadvantages of both sides more plainly set before us, than they are already in the word of God; nor are we ever like to be under better advantages to know what will be best for us, and most for our interest. Those therefore who delay, gain nothing by their delays, but give Satan more opportunity to darken their minds, to deceive them, and lead them astray in their choice. Therefore their delay of coming to a resolution is unreasonable.

7. If they come not to a determination in this life, God will determine for them, and appoint them their portion with the wicked. If sinners, by refusing to choose either life or death, either heaven or hell, could thereby avoid both, or if in this case the matter would remain undetermined till they should determine it; the folly and unreasonableness of delaying a determination would not be so great. But that is not the case; if they go on halting between two opinions, God will determine for them, and that quickly; he will determine where their portion shall be, viz., among the unbelievers, in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone forever. God will not wait upon them always, to see what they will choose; but he will put an issue to the matter by his unalterable sentence. Therefore it becomes all, if they are afraid to have their lot assigned them in hell, to come soon to a determination.

8. Delay in this case is unreasonable, because those who delay know not how soon the opportunity of choosing for themselves will be past. This opportunity will last no longer than life; when once life is past, they will no more have the offer made them; the sentence will be past; the matter will be issued.

Those who delay their choice in this world will be glad to choose afterwards; then they will not be at all at a loss which to choose; they will be able easily to determine. The judgments of sinners who are departed this life, are soon resolved whether there be any truth in religion or not; they can soon determine which is best and most eligible, a life of obedience and self-denial, with heaven for a reward, or a life of irreligion and sin, with hell for a punishment. Now they no longer halt between two opinions; but it is too late, their opportunity is past; they are ready too late. They would give all the world

for another opportunity to choose; they would then soon come to a determination. But it will not be granted them.

APPLICATION.

1. Let this put every one upon examining himself, whether or no he have ever yet come to a full determination in the affair of religion.

First. Inquire whether or no you have ever yet come to a full determination with respect to the truth of the things of religion. Have you ever been fully convinced? Is it a question which has been answered and determined with you, whether there be a future state; or does it yet remain a question with you unresolved? Are you not yet to seek whether there be any future state, and whether or no the story about Jesus Christ be any more than a fable? Here I desire you to note two things.

1. If the main reason why you assent to the truth of religion be that others believe so, and you have been so instructed from your childhood; you are of those with whom the truth of religion yet remains undetermined. Tradition and education will never fix and settle the mind in a satisfactory and effectual belief of the truth of religion. Though men, taking religion upon trust, may seem to give a full assent to the truth of religion, and not to call it in question; yet such a faith will not stand a shock; a temptation easily overthrows it: the reason of man, in time of trial, will not rest on so poor evidence as that.

There are multitudes who seem to grant the truth of religion, with whom the main foundation of their faith is the tradition of their neighbors; and it is to be feared, it is so with many who count themselves good Christians. But as to all such persons as never have seen any other evidence to satisfy them, either of the truth or falsehood of religion, they are they that halt between two opinions. The same may be said of those who are unstable in their disposition with regard to Christ or the things which he taught.

2. If you are fully come to a determination concerning the things of religion, that they are true, they will be of weight with you above all things in the world. If you be really convinced that these things are true, that they are no fable, but reality, it is impossible but that you must be influenced by them above all things in the world; for these things are so great, and so infinitely exceed all temporal things, that it cannot be otherwise. He that really is convinced that there is a heaven and hell, and an eternal judgment; that the soul, as soon as parted from the body, appears before the judgment seat of God; and that the happiness and misery of a future state is as great as the Scripture represents it; or that God is as holy, just and jealous, as he hath declared concerning himself in his word; I say, he that is really convinced and hath settled it with himself that these things are certainly true, will regard them, and be influenced by them above all things in the world. He will be more concerned by far how he shall escape eternal damnation, and have the favor of God and eternal life, than how he shall get the world, gratify the flesh, please his neighbors, get honor, or obtain any temporal advantage whatsoever. His main inquiry will not be, what shall I eat, and what shall I drink, &c., but he will seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

Examine yourselves therefore by this: Are not your hearts chiefly set upon the world, and the things of it? Is it not more your concern, care and endeavor to further your outward interest, than to secure an interest in heaven? And is not this the very reason that you have never seen the reality of eternal things?

Secondly. Inquire whether you have ever yet come to a determination about

religion with respect to the practice of it; whether you have chosen heaven with the way to it, viz., the way of obedience and self-denial, before this world and the ways of sin; whether you have determined upon it as most eligible, to devote yourselves to the service of God. Here I shall mention three or four things which are signs that men halt between two opinions in this matter.

1. To put off duty till hereafter. When persons love to keep their duty at a distance, engage not in it for the present, but choose to keep at a little distance from it; when they think of engaging in religion in better earnest in a little time, when they shall so and so be under better conveniences for it, but do it not now, do not make haste without delay; when they are very good intenders, concerning what they will do to-morrow, but very poor performers to-day; when they say, as Felix, "Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season I will call for thee;" when these things are so, it is a sign that they halt between two opinions, and have never as yet come to a full determination with respect to the practice of religion. Those that have once fully determined that religion is necessary and eligible, will not desire to put it off, but will make it their present and immediate business.

2. It is a sign of the same thing when persons are strict and conscientious in some things, but not in all, not universal in their obedience; do some duties, but live in the omission of others; avoid some sins, but allow themselves in others; are conscientious with respect to the duties of worship, public and private, but not in their behavior to their neighbors; are not just in their dealings, nor conscientious in paying their debts; nor do to others as they would that they should do to them; but have crooked, perverse ways in their dealings among mankind.

The same may be said when they are just in their dealings and trade with men, but are not conscientious in other things; indulge sensual appetites, drink to excess, or allow themselves in wanton practices: or are honest and temperate, but licentious in using their tongues, backbiting and reproaching their fellow men, 2 Tim. iii. 6, 7.

3. It is a sign that you halt between two opinions, if you sometimes are wont to be considerably engaged in religion, but at other times neglect it; sometimes forming a resolution to be in good earnest, then dropping it again; sometimes seeming to be really engaged in seeking salvation, and very earnest in religious duties; at other times wholly taken up about the things of the world, while religion is neglected, and religious duties are omitted.

These things show that you are yet unsettled, have never yet come to a full determination concerning religion, but are halting between two opinions, and therefore are thus unstable in all your ways, and proceed thus by fits and starts in religion: James i. 6, 7, 8, "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering; for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." If your determination were fixed in religion, you would be more steady in your practice.

4. It is a sign that you are halting between two opinions, if it be your manner to balk your duty whenever any notable difficulty comes in the way, considerably cross to your interest, or very inconsistent with your ease or convenience, or your temporal honor. Whatever zeal you may seem to have, whatever concern about the things of religion, and however strict you be in ordinary, you have never, if this be your manner, come to a full determination; have never fully made choice of religion and the benefits of it for your only portion; and at best have got no further than King Agrippa, who was almost persuaded

to be a Christian, Acts xxvi. 28. You are in the state of the stony ground hearers, you have no root in yourselves, and like a tree without root, are easily blown down by every wind.

II. I shall conclude with an earnest exhortation to all, no longer to halt between two opinions, but immediately to come to a determination whether to be Christians or not. Let me insist upon it, that you now make a choice, whether you will have heaven, with a life of universal and persevering obedience for your portion; or hell, with a life spent in the pursuit of this world. Consider those things which have been said, showing the unreasonableness of continuing in such irresolution about an affair of infinite importance to you, and as to which you have so short an opportunity to make your choice. Consider two things in addition to what hath been already said.

Those who live under the gospel, and thus continue undetermined about religion, are more abominable to God than the heathen. God had rather that men should either be Christians or downright heathens. He hates those persons who continue from year to year, under the calls, and warnings, and instructions, and entreaties of God's word; who yet can be brought to nothing; who will come to no determination at all; will neither be Christians nor heathens. These are they who are spoken of in Rev. iii. 15, 16: "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot: so then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth." Ezek. xx. 39, "As for you, O house of Israel, thus saith the Lord God, Go ye, serve ye every one his idols, and hereafter also, if ye will not hearken unto me: but pollute ye my holy name no more with your gifts, and with your idols." These are they spoken of in 2 Tim. iii. 7: Ever learning and never coming to a knowledge of the truth."

2. If you still refuse to come to a determination whether to be Christians or not, how just will it be, if God shall give you no further opportunity! If you refuse to make any choice at all; and after all that hath been done to bring you to it, in setting life and death so often before you, in calling and warning you, if you will not come to a determination, how just will it be, if God shall wait no longer upon you, if he shall, by his unalterable sentence, determine the case himself; if he shall fix your state with the unbelievers, and teach you the truth and eligibleness of religion, by sad and fatal experience, when it will be too late for you to choose your portion, and the offer will be no more made you.

SERMON XIX

THE SIN AND FOLLY OF DEPENDING ON FUTURE TIME.

PROVERBS XXVII. 1.—Boast not thyself of to-morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.

THE design of the wise man in this book of Proverbs, is to give us the precepts of true wisdom, or to teach us how to conduct ourselves wisely in the course of our lives. Wisdom very much consists in making a wise improvement of time, and of the opportunities we enjoy. This is often in Scripture spoken of, as a great part of true wisdom; as Deut. xxxii. 29, "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" And Psalm xc. 12, "Teach us so to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." So the wisdom of the wise virgins is represented as consisting much in this, that they improved the proper season to buy oil.

Therefore the wise man in these books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, agreeably to his design, insists on this part of wisdom. He tells us the advantage of seeking Christ early, Prov. viii. 17. And advises us TO DO WHAT OUR HAND FINDETH TO DO, WITH OUR MIGHT, Eccles. ix. 10. He advises young people to remember their Creator in the days of their youth, while the evil days come not, in which they shall say they have no pleasure, Eccles. xii. 1. So here in the text he advises us to a wise improvement of the present season.—In the words are two things to be particularly observed.

1. The precept NOT TO BOAST OF TO-MORROW; i. e., not to speak or act as though it were our own. It is absurd for men to boast of that which is not their own. The wise man would not have us behave ourselves as though any time were ours but the present. He that boasts of to-morrow, acts as though he had to-morrow in his possession, or had something whereby he might depend on it, and call it his own.

2. The reason given for this precept; FOR THOU KNOWEST NOT WHAT A DAY MAY BRING FORTH. It is a good reason why we should not behave ourselves as though the morrow were our own, that indeed it is not our own; we are not sure of it; we have no hold of future time; we know not whether we shall see the morrow: or if we do know that we shall see it, we know not what we shall see on it.

DOCTRINE.

We ought to behave ourselves every day as though we had no dependence on any other day.

In handling this doctrine, I shall (1,) briefly say something which may be needful to prevent misunderstanding. (2.) Show what is implied in this doctrine. (3.) Show when men behave themselves, as if they had dependence on another day. (4.) Show why this should be avoided.

I. To prevent a misunderstanding of the doctrine, I observe to you, that it is not meant, that we should in every respect behave as though we knew or concluded that we should not live another day. Not depending on another day, is a different thing from concluding, that we shall not live another day. We may have reason for the one, and not for the other. We have good reason not to depend on another day, but we have no reason to conclude, that we

shall not live another day. We may have no reason to depend upon another day, and so that may be one extreme. On the other hand, neither may we have any reason to depend upon it that we shall not enjoy another day, and therefore that may be another extreme.

In some respects we ought to carry ourselves, as though we knew we should not live another day, and should improve every day as if it were the last. Particularly, we should live every day as conscientiously and as holily as if we knew it were the last. We should be as careful every day to avoid all sin, as if we knew that that night our souls should be required of us. We should be as careful to do every duty which God requires of us, and take as much care that we have a good account to give to our Judge, of our improvement of that day, as if we concluded that we must be called to give an account before another day.

But in many other respects we are not obliged to behave ourselves as though we concluded that we should not live to another day. If we had reason to conclude that we should not live another day, some things would not be our duty which now are our duty. As for instance, in such a case it would not be the duty of any person to make provision for his temporal subsistence during another day: to neglect which, as things now are, would be very imprudent and foolish, as the consequences would show, if every man were to act in this manner; at this rate the whole world would presently murder itself.

If so, it would never be man's duty to plough or sow the field, or to lay up for winter; but these things are man's duty; as Prov. vi. 6, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways, and be wise: which, having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest." And chap. x. 5, &c., "He that gathereth in summer is a wise son; but he that sleepeth in harvest, is a son that causeth shame." And many other places might be mentioned.

So, on the other hand, if we were certain that we should not live another day, some things would be our duty to-day, which now are not so. As for instance, it would be proper for us to spend our time in giving our dying counsels, and in setting our houses in order. If it were revealed to us, that we should die before to-morrow morning, we ought to look upon it as a call of God to us, to spend the short remainder of our lives in those things which immediately concern our departure, more than otherwise it would be our duty to do.

But the words of the text, which forbid us to boast of to-morrow, cannot be extended so far as to signify, that we ought in all respects to live, as if we knew we should not see another day. Yet they undoubtedly mean, that we ought not to behave ourselves in any respect, as though we depended on another day.

I now proceed,

II. To show what is implied in the precept, *Boast not thyself of to-morrow*, or in behaving ourselves every day as though we had no dependence on any other day. In this precept two things seem to be forbidden.

1. Boasting ourselves of what shall be on the morrow, or behaving ourselves as though we depended on particular things to come to pass in this world, in some future time. As when men behave themselves, as though they depended on being rich, or promoted to honor hereafter; or as though they were sure of accomplishing any particular design another day. So did the rich man in the gospel, when he did not only promise himself, that he should live many years, but promised himself also, that he should be rich many years. Hence he said to his soul, that *he had much goods laid up for many years*.

And if men act as though they depended upon it, that they should another day accomplish such and such things for their souls, then may they be said to boast themselves of to-morrow, and not to behave themselves as though they depended on no other day. As when they behave themselves, as though they depended upon it, that they should at another day have such and such advantages for the good of their souls; that they should at another day have the strivings of God's Spirit; that they should at another day find themselves disposed to be thorough in seeking their salvation; that they should at another day have a more convenient season; and that God at another day would stand ready to hear their prayers, and show them mercy.

Or if they act as though they depended upon it that they should have considerable opportunity on a death-bed to seek mercy; or whatever they promise themselves shall come to pass respecting them in this world, if they act as depending on it, they boast themselves of to-morrow.

2. Another thing implied, is our boasting of future time itself, or acting as though we depended on it, that we should have our lives continued to see another day. Not only is the command of God delivered in the text transgressed by those who behave themselves as depending upon it, that they shall see and obtain such and such things to-morrow; but by those who act as depending upon it, that they shall remain in being in this world to-morrow.

Both these ways of boasting of to-morrow are reproved by the Apostle James, chapter iv. 13: "Go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain." By promising themselves that they shall do such and such things, and that they shall get gain, they boast themselves of what shall come to pass in such a time. The apostle in the next verse teaches them, that they ought not to do this, no, nor so much as depend upon seeing another day, or on having their lives continued. Verse 14, "Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow: for what is your life? It is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." And in verse 15, he teaches us that both are uncertain and dependent on the will of God, viz., whether we shall live another day, and if we do, whether such and such things shall come to pass: "For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that." Therefore he adds in verse 16, "But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil."

I come now,

III. To show more particularly, when men act as though they depended on another day.

1. They will do so, if they set their hearts on the enjoyments of this life. I mean not if they have any manner of affection to them. We may have some affection to the enjoyments of this world; otherwise they would cease to be enjoyments. If we might have no degree of rejoicing in them, we could not be thankful for them. Persons may in a degree take delight in earthly friends, and other earthly enjoyments. It is agreeable to the wise man's advice that we should do so: Eccles. v. 18, "It is good and comely for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labor that he taketh under the sun."

But by setting our hearts on these things, by placing our happiness in them, and letting out the current of our affections after them, by turning and fixing our inclinations so much upon them, that we cannot well enjoy ourselves without them, so that very much of the strength of the faculties of our minds is employed and taken up about these things, we show that we have our dependence on another day.

The man who doth thus, acts as though he depended on another day, yea, many other days, in the world: for it is most evident, that if the enjoyments of this world be of such a nature that they are not to be depended on for one day more, they are not worth the setting of our hearts upon them, or the placing of our happiness in them. We may rejoice in the enjoyments of the world, but not in such a manner as to place the rest of our souls in them. As the apostle saith, we should rejoice in them, as though we rejoiced not, 1 Cor. vii. 30. So that if this joy should fail, our stock may hold good; and in this case we must behave ourselves only as if we had lost a small stream of joy, but still had the fountain in full possession. We should conduct ourselves as those who have not the foundation of their joy shaken, though some appurtenances have failed. Our happiness as to the body of it, if I may so speak, should yet stand as on an immovable foundation.

They who exceedingly rejoice, and are very much pleased and elated with the enjoyments of the world, certainly behave themselves as though they had much dependence on their continuance for more than one or two days more.

They that addict themselves to vain mirth, and lead a jovial life, show that they set their hearts on the enjoyments of the world, and act as those who depend on more days than the present. For if they were sensible that they could not depend on any future time, but that death would put an eternal end to all their carnal mirth before to-morrow, they would have no heart to spend the present day in such a manner as they now do. It would immediately produce in them a sober, solid disposition, far from levity and vanity.

And when persons are very much sunk with the loss of any temporal enjoyments, or with any temporal disappointments, it shows that they set their hearts upon them, and behave as though they boasted of to-morrow, and depended on their longer continuance in life. If they had no such dependence, they would not be frustrated in their dependence; or they would not be overwhelmed by their frustration. If they be very much sunk, and the comfort of their lives be destroyed by it, it shows that those temporal enjoyments were too much the foundation on which their comfort stood. That which makes a building totter, and threatens its destruction, is not the taking away of some of the exterior parts of the superstructure, but the removal of some considerable part of the foundation on which the house stands.

2. If men are proud of their worldly circumstances, it shows that they have a dependence on to-morrow; for no man would think it worth his while to vaunt himself in that which is to be depended on only for a day. Though a man have a great estate to-day, he will not be puffed up with it, unless he depend upon having it to-morrow. A man who hath no dependence on any other but that he may to-morrow be in the grave, where the small and great are upon a level, Job iii. 19, will not be much lifted up with his advancement to a post of honor.

That person will not be proud of his rich and fine clothes, who is sensible that he cannot depend upon it, that he shall not be stripped by death to-morrow, and sent naked out of the world, as he came naked into it. He will not to-day be very proud of his personal beauty, who hath no dependence on escaping to-morrow that stroke of death which will mar all his beauty, and make that face which he now thinks so comely, appear ghastly and horrid; when instead of a ruddy and florid countenance, there will be blood settled, cold and congealed, flesh stiff and clayey, teeth set, eyes fixed and sunk into the head. Nor will he to-day very much affect to beautify and adorn with gaudy and flaunting apparel, that body concerning which he is sensible that he can have no dependence that

" will not be wrapped in a winding-sheet to-morrow, to be carried to the grave, there to root, and to be covered and filled with worms.

3. So when men envy others their worldly enjoyments, their wealth, or their worldly ease, or their titles and high places, or envy them their sensual pleasures, or any of their worldly circumstances, it shows that they set their hearts on the things of the world; and that they are not sensible that these things are not to be depended on for another day. If they were, they would not think them worth their envy. They would appear so worthless in their eyes, that they would not care who had them, nor who went without them.

So when they contend about worldly possessions and enjoyments (as almost all the contentions that are in the world are about these things), it shows that they have dependence on to-morrow; otherwise they would not think the enjoyments of the world worth the contending about. They would be very much of the temper recommended by Jesus Christ, Matt. v. 40, "He that will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also."

4. Men behave themselves as if they depended on another day, when they rest and are easy to-day, in a condition out of which they must be delivered before they die. When a man's mind is at ease and rest, there is something that he rests in; that rest must have some foundation, either real or imaginary. But if the man be in a condition from which he is sensible he must some time or other be delivered, or be undone, it is impossible that he should rest in the thoughts of remaining in his condition always, and never being delivered from it; for no man is willing to be ruined; no man can rest in that which he conceives to be connected with his own misery and undoing.

Therefore, if he rests in such a condition for the present, it must be on a supposition, that he shall be delivered from it. If he rest in it to-day, it must be because he depends on being delivered another day, and therefore depends on seeing another day.

We in this land generally profess that, as we are by nature, we are exposed to eternal death, and that therefore there is a necessity that we get out of a natural condition some time before we die. And those among us who are sensible that they have never passed through any such change as in Scripture is called a being born again, though they be not sufficiently convinced that there is any such place as hell, yet have a kind of belief of it; at least they do not conclude, that there is no such place, and therefore cannot but be sensible that it would be dreadful to die unconverted. Therefore, if they be in a considerable degree of ease and quietness in the condition they are in, it must be because they have a dependence on being delivered out of such a condition some time before they die.

Inasmuch as they are easy in remaining in such a condition to-day, without any prospect of present deliverance, it shows plainly that they depend on another day. If they did not, they could have no manner of ease or quietness in their spirits in remaining in a natural condition to the end of the present day; because if there be no grounds of dependence on any further opportunity than what they have to-day, then what they are exposed to, by missing the opportunity which they have to-day, is infinitely dreadful.

Persons who are secure in their sins, under the light of the gospel, unless they be deceived with a false hope, are generally so because they boast themselves of to-morrow. They depend on future opportunity; they flatter themselves with hopes of living long in the world; they depend on what shall come to pass hereafter; they depend on the fulfilment of their good intentions as to what they will do at a more convenient season.

5. Men behave themselves as those who depend on another day, when they neglect any thing to-day which must be done before they die. If there be any thing, let it be what it will, which is absolutely necessary to be done some time before death, and the necessity of it be sufficiently declared and shown to th person for whom it is thus necessary, if he neglect setting about it immediately sincerely, and with all his might, certainly it carries this face with it, that the man depends upon its being done hereafter, and consequently that he shall have opportunity to do it.

Because, as to those things which are absolutely necessary to be done, there is need, not only of a possibility of a future opportunity, but of something which is to be depended on, some good ground to conclude that we shall have future opportunity; therefore, whoever lives under the gospel, that doth not now this day thoroughly reform his life, by casting away every abomination, and denying every lust, and doth not this day also apply himself to the practice of the whole of his duty towards God and towards man, and doth not now begin to make religion his main business, he acts as one who depends on another day; because he is abundantly taught that these things must be done before he dies.

So those who have been seeking salvation for a great while, in a dull, insincere, and slighty manner, and find no good effect of it, have abundant reason to conclude, that some time before they die, they must alter their hand, and must not only seek, but strive, to enter in at the strait gate, and must be violent for the kingdom of heaven; and therefore, if they do not begin thus to change their hand to-day, they act as those who depend on another day.

So those who have hitherto lived in the neglect of some particular known duty, whether it be the duty of secret prayer, or the duty of paying some old debt, which they have long owed to their neighbor, or the duty of confessing some fault to a brother who hath aught against them, or the duty of making restitution for some injury which they have done their neighbor, they act as those who depend on another day.

6. Men behave themselves as though they depended on another day, if they do that to-day which some time or other must be undone. There are many things done by men which must be undone by them. They must go back again from the way which they had gone, or they are ruined to all eternity. Therefore, in doing these things, they act as those who depend on future opportunity to undo them: as when a man cheats or defrauds his neighbor in any thing, he acts as one that boasts of to-morrow; for he must undo what he doth before he dies; he must some time or other make restitution, or divine justice, which oversees all things, and governs the whole world, and will see to it that right be done, will not let go its hold of him.

So when men hearken to temptation, and yield to the solicitations of their lusts to commit any sin, they act as those who depend on another day. They do what must be undone. What they then do must be undone by hearty and thorough repentance, or they are ruined and lost forever. The morsel they swallowed down, they must vomit up again. So if persons have been seeking salvation for a time, and then afterwards are guilty of backsliding, and turn back after their hands have been put to the plough, they act as those who depend on another day. For what they now do, they must undo some time or other; they must go back again from their backsliding, and have all their work to do over again. And these things must be undone in this world, while men live; for there will be no undoing of them afterwards; they may be suffered for, but never can be undone.

I come now,

IV. To show why we ought not thus to boast ourselves of to-morrow; but on the contrary, to behave ourselves every day as though we had no dependence on another day. And there is this plain and sufficient REASON for it, viz., that we have no grounds of dependence on another day. We have neither any foundation to depend upon seeing any particular things come to pass another day, which we may hope or wish for, nor upon enjoying another day here in this world. We have nothing for a foundation of dependence that we shall not be in eternity before another day, as both reason and experience show.

We have no promise of God that we shall ever see another day. We are in God's hands; our lives are in his hands; he hath set our bounds; the number of our months and days is with him; nor hath he told them to us. We see that the life of man at longest is very short, and that nothing is more uncertain; and it is a thing universal among mankind, that they know not the day of their death. We see that great natural abilities, and sharpness of wit, and clearness of discernment, do not help to any discovery in this matter. But wise and discerning men are as uncertain of the term of their lives as others.

There are so many ways and means whereby the lives of men come to an end, that no circumstances in which a man can be are any security to him from death. That it is but a very little while till to-morrow, is no good ground of dependence that we shall live till then. We see that deaths as sudden as our dying before to-morrow morning, are common in the world. We very often see or hear of sudden deaths. How many suddenly, in a few minutes, pass from a state of health to a state of death, in the daytime, by several kinds of disease, which give no warning of their approach, and by many unforeseen accidents! How many go to bed, and to sleep, in health, and are found dead in their beds in the morning! So that our present health is no good ground of dependence that we shall live to see another day.

That persons are now in youth, is no good ground of dependence upon another day; for sudden, unexpected deaths are common even among those who are in the bloom of youth. Nor is it any ground of dependence in this case, that a man is of a more than ordinary healthy and strong constitution. It is found by experience, that such are liable to sudden death as well as others. Job xxi. 23, "One dieth in his full strength. His breasts are full of milk, and his bones are moistened with marrow."

That persons have already lived to see a great many days, and that after they had been often in times past told, that they were uncertain of any future time; or that persons have a strong desire to live longer; or that they are now very unprepared for death, both on temporal and spiritual accounts; is no ground of dependence on another day. Death tarries for no man, but comes when and to whom he is sent, and strikes the deadly blow, whether the man be prepared or not.

Again, that men have been very useful in their day, and that it is of great importance to their families and neighbors that they should live longer, is no ground of dependence. The most useful men are often cut down by death, in the midst of their usefulness. The same may be said, though we cannot see which way death should come at us before to-morrow. To how many accidents, to how many diseases are we liable, which may prove fatal before to-morrow, which yet it is impossible for us to foresee! So, if we be very careful of our lives, and our health, not to expose ourselves to any dangers, still this is no ground of dependence as to any future time. Death comes in many ways which were not thought of. Men foresee not the means of their death, any more than the fish securely swimming in the water foresees the net, or the bird that securely

feeds upon the bait sees the snare. It is as the wise man observes, in Eccles. ix. 12, "For man also knoweth not his time; as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them."

IMPROVEMENT.

I. I shall improve this doctrine, by putting you all upon examining yourselves, whether you do not boast yourselves of to-morrow, or whether you do not live in such a manner as you would not, were it not that you depend on future time and future opportunity in the world. Would not your behavior be very different from what it now is, if you every day lived and acted without any dependence on seeing one day more?

You cannot but acknowledge, every one of you, that it is most reasonable that you should live and act thus. If you should be particularly inquired of, you would doubtless own, and you cannot but own, that you have no good ground of dependence on another day; and therefore that you cannot act wisely any otherwise than in acting as one who hath no dependence on any such thing. Therefore inquire whether you act wisely and reasonably in this respect.

1. Do you not set your hearts much more on this world, than you would, if you had no dependence on the morrow? Is not the language of the rich man in the gospel, the secret language of your hearts: "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years?" &c. Is not this the language of your hearts, with respect to what you have gotten already; which makes you place your happiness so much in it? And with respect to what of the world you are seeking and pursuing, is it not with a dependence on enjoying it for a great while, when you shall have obtained it? Are not your lands and other possessions which you have gotten, or about to get, in your own imagination, yours for a great while?

Would your mind be so filled up with thoughts and cares about these things, so much to the crowding out of things of another world? Would you lay yourselves under so great disadvantages for your souls' good, by involving yourselves in worldly cares, if you had no dependence on having any thing to do with these things for more than the present day? If you did not depend on considerable more time in the world, would your inquiry be so much, What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed? And so little, How shall we make our calling and election sure? How shall we be assured that we are upon a good foundation for another world, and that we are in such a state that death cannot hurt us? How shall we be sure that we are ready to appear before the judgment seat of a heart-searching God?

Would there be altogether so much of your time spent in laying up treasure on earth, and so little in laying up treasure in heaven, that you might have store against the day of death, were it not that you put death at a distance? Would you be so much raised at your temporal prosperity, and so much sunk when you meet with crosses and disappointments in your worldly affairs, if you did not think that continuance in the world is to be depended on for more days than the present?

Let those who very much affect to adorn their bodies in gaudy apparel, inquire whether they would think it worth their while to spend so much time to make themselves fine, and to set themselves forth as gayer than others, if they really had no dependence that their bodies would be preserved one day longer from being clasped in the cold arms of death?

2. Inquire whether you would not much less meddle with the concerns of others, and be much more employed with your own hearts, if each day you had no dependence on living another day. If you were sensible that you had no other day to depend upon than this day, you would be sensible that you had great affairs of your own to attend to. You would find a great deal of business to do at home concerning affairs between God and your own soul; and considering that you cannot depend on another day, it would seem to you that you have but a short time in which to do it, and that therefore you have need to be much engaged in it. You would say as Christ did, I must work while the day lasts, for the night cometh wherein no man can work. You would find so much to be done, and so much difficulty in doing it, that you would have little leisure, and little heart to intermeddle with the business of others. Your business would be confined to a much narrower compass, to a less circle than now it is. You would have so much to do at home in your closets, and with your own hearts, that you would find no occasion to go abroad for business to fill up your time.

But the truth is, men conceive of a great deal of time which they have to be filled up, and hence they want business to fill it up. They depend on to-morrow, and the day following, and next month, and next year, yea, many years to come. When they are young they depend on living to be middle aged, and when middle aged they depend on old age, and always put far away the day of death. Let them be young or old, there always seems to them to be a great vacancy between them and death; hence they wander to and fro for business to fill up that vacancy.

Whereas if they were sensible of the uncertainty of life, they would, in the first place, make sure of their own business; the business of their own precious, immortal souls would be done, before they would attend much to the business of other people. They would have no desire or disposition to concern themselves with every private quarrel which breaks out in the neighborhood. They would not think it much concerned them to inquire into the matter, and to pass their censure on the affair. They would find something else to do, than to sit by the hour together, discussing and censuring the conduct of such and such persons, gathering up or rehearsing the stories which are carried about to the disadvantage of this and that person.

We seldom, if ever, see men who are upon sick beds, and look upon themselves very dangerously sick, disposed to spend their time in this manner; and the reason is, that they look upon it doubtful whether they shall live very long. They do not so much as others, depend on much time to spare; hence their minds are taken up more about their own souls' concerns, than about the concerns of others. So it would be with persons in health, if their health did not make them depend on a great deal of time in the world.

3. If you each day depended on no other day but the present, would you not engage and interest yourselves much less in party designs and schemes, than you are now wont to do? Among a people divided into two parties, as this town hath been for a long time, there is commonly much done by the partisans in forming schemes of opposition to one another. There is always a strife, who shall get their wills and carry their point. This often engages them in open quarrels, and also in secret intrigues. That there is so much done in these things, is a certain evidence that they boast themselves of to-morrow, and put death at a distance.

Men would certainly find themselves very much indisposed to such things if they were so sensible of the uncertainty of life, as to depend on no other day than the present. It is therefore very proper, that you should every one examine

yourselves in this particular, at this time. If it were really so with you, that you depended on no other day than the present, would your hearts be so much engaged in the strife between the two parties, as they often are? Would your spirits be so often raised and ruffled? Would you go about with so much of a grudge and prejudice against such and such men; harboring so much of old leaven, which so often breaks out in heats of spirit; and as an old sore which was skinned over, but not cured, sets to raging, breaks open and runs, with a touch which would not have hurt sound flesh?

Commonly in the management of a strife between two parties there is a great deal of envy. When any who belong to one of the parties seem to prosper, the other party will envy them; it is a grievous thing to them. So there is also much contempt; when one of the parties gets the ascendant a little over the other, they are ready to make the utmost improvement of it, and to insult the other party.

There is commonly in such cases a great deal of mutual secret reproach. When those of one party get together then is the time to inveigh against those of the other party, and to set forth their injustice and their fraudulent practices. Then is the time for them to pass their censure on their words and actions. Then is the time to expose their own surmises and suspicions of what the other party intends, what it aims at in such and such things, what the purposes of individuals are, and what they suppose their scant actions are.

Then is the time for all that are friends in the cause, and engaged in the same designs, to entertain one another by ridiculing the words and actions of the other party, and to make themselves sport of their folly and their disappointments; and much is done at calling one another RACA and FOOLS, or other names equivalent, if not much more than equivalent. Then is the time to lay their heads together, to plot and contrive how they shall manage such an affair so as to disappoint the other party, and obtain their own wills.

Brethren, these things ought not so to be among a Christian people; especially among a people that has made the profession which we have made. Nor would they be so if it were not for your dependence on much future time in the world. If you were so sensible of your continual liableness to death, that every day was the last you depended upon, these things certainly would not be so. For let us but consider what are the effects of death with respect to such things. It puts an end to party quarrels. Many men hold these quarrels as long as they live. They begin young, and hold on through many great and sore afflictions and chastisements of Providence. The old sore remains, when the supporters of nature bow, and the eyes grow dim, and the hands tremble with age. But death, when that comes, puts an end to all their quarrelling in this world. Death silences the most clamorous, and censorious, and backbiting tongue. When men are dead, they cease to lay schemes against those of another party. Death dashes all their schemes, so far as they have any concern in them. Psalm cxlvi. 4, "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish."

When men are dead, they cease to bite and devour others; as it is said to have been of old a proverb among the Egyptians, *Dead men don't bite.* There are many who will bite and devour as long as they live, but death tames them. Men could not be quiet or safe by them while alive, but none will be afraid of them when they shall be dead. The bodies of those that made such a noise and tumult when alive, when dead, lie as quietly among the graves of their neighbors as any others. Their enemies, of whom they strove to get their wills while alive, get their wills of them when they are dead. Nothing can please

their enemies better than to have them out of their way. It suits them, that those who were troublesome to them, are locked up safe in the close grave, where they will no more stand in their way.

After men are dead, there are no more effects of their pride, their craftiness, their hatred and envy. Eccles. ix. 6, "Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy is now perished."

The time will soon come, when as many of you who are now present, as have for many years been at times warmly contending one with another, will be very peaceable as to any quarrelling in this world. Your dead bodies will probably lie quietly together in the same burying place. If you do not leave off contending before death, how natural will it be for others to have such thoughts as these in their minds, when they shall come to see your dead corpses: What! Is this the man who used to be so busy in carrying on the designs of his party? Oh, now he has done; now he hath no more any part in any of these things; now it doth not at all concern him, who get their wills, or what party is uttermost. We shall hear his voice no more in our *town meetings*. He will not sit any more to reproach and laugh at others. He is gone to appear before his Judge, and to receive according to his conduct in life.

The consideration of such things as these would certainly have a mighty effect among us. If we did not put far away the day of death, if all acted every day as not depending on any other day, we should be a peaceable, quiet people.

4. Inquire whether or no you do not allow yourselves in some things, and endeavor to flatter yourselves that there is no evil in them, which you would by no means care to do if you had not a dependence on living till to-morrow. It is very common among men, when they are strongly enticed to some sinful practice, by their worldly interest, or by their carnal appetites, to pretend that they do not think there is any evil in it; when indeed they know better. The pretence they make use of for the present, to still the cry of their consciences, is no more than a pretence to serve a present turn. And if they expected to have their souls required of them that night, they would by no means dare to persist in the practice.

Therefore examine the liberties you take by this test, What would you think of them, if you now should have the following news sent you by some messenger from heaven: John or Thomas (or whatever your name be), this night thy soul shall be required of thee? How would such tidings strike you! How would they alter the face of things! Doubtless your thoughts would be very quick; you would soon begin to reflect on yourselves, and to examine your past and present conduct. And in what colors would these and those liberties which you now take, appear to you in the case now supposed? Would you then be as full in it as you are now, that there is no evil in them? Would you not be at all the less bold to go forward and meet death, for having continued in such practices? Would you dare to commit such acts again before you should die, which now you say are lawful? Would not the few hours which you would have to live, be at all the more uncomfortable to you, for having done such things? Would you not presently wish that you had let them alone? Yea, would they not appear frightful and terrifying like ghosts to you? If it be thus, it is a sign that the reason why you now allow yourselves in them, and plead for the lawfulness of them, is, that you put death at a distance, and depend on many other days in the world.

5. Inquire whether you do not some things on the presumption, that you shall hereafter repent of them. Is not this the very thing which causes you to

dare to do such things as you do? Is it not the very ground on which you venture so and so to gratify your lusts? Let young people examine all their secret carriage; what they do alone in the dark and in secret corners. God knoweth, and your own hearts know, though men do not know. Put the question impartially to your own consciences; is not this the very thing that gives you the courage to do as you do, that you hear that God is a very merciful God, and that he often of his sovereign mercy gives repentance of great sins, and even wilful sins, and in consequence of repentance forgives? And so you hope that one day or other he will do so to you. You intend some time hereafter earnestly to seek it; and you hope you shall be awakened. And if you be very earnest, as you intend to be, you hope you shall be converted, and then you shall be forgiven, and it will be as well as if you had never committed such sins.

If this be the case consider how you boast of to-morrow, and foolishly depend on future opportunity to repent, as well as foolishly presume on the mercy of God to give you repentance, at the same time that you take a course to provoke God, forever to give you up to a sealed hardness and blindness, and to a most fearful damnation; not considering that God will glorify his revenging justice as well as his mercy; nor remembering the sad example of Esau, "who for a morsel of meat sold his birthright; and afterwards, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears." Heb. xii. 16, 17.

6. Inquire whether you improve this day, as one who doth not depend upon ever having an opportunity to keep another Sabbath, or hear another sermon. It appears from what hath been already said, that you have no grounds to depend on any more such opportunities. Now the day is present, and so you are in a better capacity to determine how it is with you. It is but for you to reflect upon yourselves, to look inward, and see how it is with you now at this present time. And how is it? Are you as strict and diligent in keeping this Sabbath, watching your thoughts, and keeping your hearts, striving in duties both public and private, and improving ordinances, as might be expected of one who hath no dependence on ever enjoying such an opportunity any more; one who doth not depend on ever setting foot again within the walls of God's house?

Do you hear this sermon with that attention, and care, and desire, and endeavor to improve it for your good, as you would, if you did not depend on ever hearing another sermon; or did not depend upon it that your bodies would not be in the grave, and your souls fixed in eternity, in their unalterable state, before the next Sabbath?

7. Are you careful to see to it that the grounds of your hope are good? A man who hath a hope of being in a state of acceptance with God, but is not sure, if he had no dependence on any other day's opportunity of making it sure than to-day; if he did not at all depend upon it, but that his hope must be tried before to-morrow, by the all-seeing, heart-searching God; would be very strict in examining himself and searching the grounds of his hope, and would not rest in an uncertainty. He would be very thorough in informing himself what might be depended on as good evidence of an interest in Christ, and what not; and would be exceedingly strict in searching his own heart, to see whether there were any thing in him that comes up to the requisites laid down in the Scriptures.

If what appears hopeful in him were dim and obscure, he would set himself very earnestly to obtain that which would be more clear and manifest, and would cry earnestly to God for it, and would apply himself to a diligent use of means in order to it. And good reason why; for he depends on no other on-

portunity to make his calling and election sure, than what he hath to-day. Inquire therefore whether you are thus thorough in examining your hope. And are you thus careful effectually to see to it, that you are on a sure foundation? If not, then you behave yourselves as those that depend on to-morrow.

II. This doctrine may be improved in a use of EXHORTATION to all, to spend every day as not depending on any other day. It is certainly most reasonable that we should do so. God hath concealed from us the day of our death, without doubt, partly for this end, that we might be excited to be always ready, and might live as those that are always waiting for the coming of their Lord, agreeably to the counsel which Christ gives us, Matt. xxiv. 42, 43, 44, and chap. xxv. 13, and Mark xiii. 32, &c.

That watchman is not faithful, who, being set to defend a house from thieves, or a city from an enemy who is at hand, will, at any hour, venture to sleep, trusting that the thief or enemy will not come. Therefore it is expected of the watchman, that he behave himself every hour of the night, as one who doth not depend upon it that the enemy will tarry until the next hour. Now, therefore, let me, in Christ's name, renew the call and counsel of Jesus Christ to you, to watch as those that know not what hour your Lord will come. Let me call upon those poor wretches who are hitherto in a natural condition, having never been born again. Depend not upon it, that you will not be in hell before to-morrow morning. You have no reason for any such dependence; God hath not promised to keep you from it, or to withhold his wrath so long.

How can you reasonably be easy or quiet for one day, or one night, in such a condition, when you know not but that your Lord will come this night, and what hour of the night you know not? And if you should then be found as you now are, unregenerate, how unprepared would you be for his coming, and how fearful would be the consequence! Be exhorted therefore, for your own sakes, immediately to awake out of sleep, and sleep no more, but watch henceforward, and improve the remainder of this day, and each of your days henceforward, if you shall live to see any more days, as not depending on any other day.

Let me exhort every one, of whatever character, to have no dependence on any future time; to keep every Sabbath as having no dependence on the opportunity to enjoy another Sabbath; to hear every sermon, as if it were the last that you shall ever hear. And when you go into your closets, and address yourselves to your Father who seeth in secret, do it in no dependence on any future opportunity to perform the same duty. When any of you that are young go into company for your amusement and diversion, consider that that may be the last opportunity of the like nature that ever you may have. In all your dealings with your neighbors, act as if you were never to make another bargain. Behave in your families every day, as though you depended on no other, than to take your final leave of them before another day. Here I shall offer you two motives.

1. Consider, if you will hearken to this counsel, how much it will tend to your safety and peace in life and death. It is the way really and truly to be ready for death; yea, to be fit to live or fit to die; to be ready for affliction and adversity, and for whatever God in his providence shall bring upon you. It is the way to be in, not only an habitual, but actual preparedness for all changes, and particularly for your last change.

It is the way to possess your souls in a serene and undisturbed peace, and to enable you to go on with an immovable fortitude of soul, to meet the most frightful changes, to encounter the most formidable enemies, and to be ready

with unshaken confidence to triumph over death whenever you meet him; to have your hearts fixed, trusting in God, as one that stands on a firm foundation, and hath for his habitation the munition of rocks, that is not afraid of evil tidings, but laughs at the fear of the enemy. It will be the way for you to possess that quietness and assurance spoken of, Isai. xxxii. 17, "The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever."

The servant who always stands watching, will not be at all surprised at the news that his Lord is coming. This will be the way for you to live above the fear of death. Yea, if heaven and earth should shake, you may stand firm and unshaken, being settled on a rock, which cannot be removed, but abideth forever. O how happy are such persons, who have such safety and peace! What a blessed peace is that which arises from such a constant preparation for death! How happy therefore is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing!

2. What dismal calamities and miseries mankind are subject to for want of this, for want of behaving themselves every day as not depending on any future day! The way of the world is, one day foolishly to depend on another, yea, on many others. And what is the consequence? Why, the consequence with respect to the bigger part of the world is, that they live all their days without any true peace or rest of soul. They are all their lifetime subject to bondage through fear of death. And when death sensibly approaches they are put into a terrible fright. They have a dismal view of their past lives; the ill improvement of their time, and the sins they have been guilty of, stand staring them in the face, and are more frightful than so many devils. And when they look forward into that eternity whither they are going, how dismal is the prospect! O how do their hearts shrink at the thought of it! They go before the judgment seat of God, as those that are dragged thither, while they would gladly, if they could, hide themselves in the caves and dens of the earth.

And what is worse yet than all the disquietude and terror of conscience in this world; the consequence of a contrary behavior, with respect to the bulk of mankind, is their eternal perdition. They flatter themselves, that they shall see another day, and then another, and trust to that, until finally most of them are swallowed up in hell, to lament their folly to all eternity, in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.

Consider how it was with all the foolish virgins who trusted to the delay of the bridegroom's coming; when he came they were surprised, and found unprepared, having no oil in their lamps at that time; and while they went to buy, those who were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut against them, and they came afterwards crying in vain, *Lord, Lord, open to us.*

SERMON XX.

UNBELIEVERS CONTEMN THE GLORY AND EXCELLENCY OF CHRIST.

ACTS IV. 11.—This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders

IN the foregoing chapters we have an account of the outpouring of the Holy Ghost on the apostles at Pentecost, and of the extraordinary effects of it, in their speaking boldly in the name of Jesus, and speaking many strange languages, and so being made the instruments of the sudden conversion of vast multitudes. And in the chapter immediately preceding there is an account how Peter and John miraculously healed a man who had been a cripple from his birth; which, together with the word which they spake to the people that flocked together on the occasion, was the means of a new accession to the church; so that the number of them that heard the word and believed, as we are told in the fourth verse of this chapter, was about five thousand.

This sudden and extraordinary progress of the gospel greatly alarmed the priests and scribes, and other chief men among the Jews; so that they laid hands on Peter and John and put them in hold, and the next day brought them forth to appear before them, and called them to an account for what they had done. They asked them particularly by what power, or by what name they had wrought the miracle on the impotent man. Upon which Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, makes answer, "Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel—Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought by you builders, which is become the head of the corner." In the verse of the text the apostle mentions to them as now fulfilled, that in the 118th Psalm verse 22, "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner." This text, in that psalm, the apostle applies to them:

1. By telling them, *This is the stone*, i. e., this person of whom he had spoken in the foregoing verse, viz., Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom they had crucified, and whom God had raised from the dead.

2. By telling them, that they were the builders spoken of. They before whom the apostle then was, and to whom he was speaking, were rulers and elders and scribes of the people, the high priest and other priests. They, as they were set to be rulers and teachers among God's people, by their office, were called to be builders of the church of God.

3. By telling them, that they had set this stone at nought. They had so done by refusing to accept of him. Christ came to his own, and his own received him not; and not only so, but they had openly manifested the greatest contempt of him. They had mocked him, scourged and spit upon him, and in derision crowned him with a crown of thorns, and arrayed him in a mock robe, and then had put him to a most ignominious death.

4. By telling them, that notwithstanding this, he was become the head of the corner. In spite of all that they could do, he had obtained the chief place in the building. God had made him the main foundation of it, by raising him from the dead, and so putting great honor upon him, and by pouring out his Spirit and enduing his disciples with extraordinary gifts, and by suddenly convert-

so many thousands to be the followers of Christ. They put him to death that he might have no followers, concluding that that would utterly put an end to his interest in Judea. But they were greatly disappointed; for the gospel had incomparably greater success after Christ's death than before. God had accomplished that very thing which they endeavored to prevent by Christ's crucifixion, viz., Christ's being believed in and submitted to, as the great Prophet of God and Prince of his people.

DOCTRINE.

Unbelievers set nothing by all the glory and excellency in Christ.

I. They set nothing by the excellency of his person. Christ is a great and glorious person, a person of infinite worthiness, on which account he is infinitely esteemed and loved of the Father, and is continually adored by the angels. But unbelievers have no esteem at all of him on that account. They have no value at all of him on account of his being the Son of God. He is not set the higher in their esteem on the account of his standing in so near and honorable a relation to God the Father. He is not valued at all the more for his being a divine person, or one that is God. By his having the divine nature, he is infinitely exalted above all created beings. But he is not at all exalted by it in their esteem. They set nothing by his infinite Majesty. His glorious brightness and greatness excite not any true respect or reverence in them.

Christ is the holy one of God: he is so holy that the heavens are not pure in his sight. He is possessed of all that holiness which is the infinite beauty and loveliness of the divine nature. But an unbeliever sets nothing by the holiness of Christ. Christ is the wisdom of God and the power of God, as he is called, 1 Cor. i. 24. But an unbeliever sets nothing by his power and wisdom. The Lord Jesus Christ is full of grace and mercy; the mercy and love of God appear nowhere else so brightly and gloriously as they do in the face of Jesus Christ. But an unbeliever sets no value at all upon the infinite grace of Christ.

Neither do unbelievers set any thing by those excellent virtues which appeared in Christ's human nature when he was upon earth. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners; he was meek and lowly of heart; he was patient under afflictions and injuries; when he was reviled, he reviled not again. But unbelievers set nothing by these things in Jesus Christ. They very often hear how excellent and glorious a person Christ is; they are told of his holiness, and grace, and condescension, and meekness, and have the excellencies of Christ plainly set forth to them; yet they set all at nought.

II. They set nothing by his excellency in his work and office. They are told how glorious and complete a Mediator he is, how sufficient to answer all our necessities, and to save sinners to the uttermost; but they make light of it all; yea, they make nothing of it. They hear of the wonderful wisdom of God in contriving such a way of salvation by Christ, they have the manifold wisdom of God set forth to them; but they set nothing by this wisdom, nor do they make any account of the excellency of this way of salvation.

The unbeliever hears what a wonderful thing it was, that he who was in the form of God, and esteemed it no robbery to be equal with God, should take upon him the human nature, and come and live in this world in a mean and low condition; but he makes nothing of this. He hears much of the dying love of Christ to sinners, how wonderful it was that so glorious a person, who is infinitely above the angels, should so set his love on such worms of the dust, so

much below him, on sinful creatures, who were his enemies, as to come and be made a curse for them, and die a cruel and ignominious death in their stead; but he sets nothing by all this. This dying love of Christ is a thing of no account with him; those great things that Christ hath done and suffered are with him light matters, things of no weight at all.

Unbelievers not only set little by the glory and excellency of Christ, but they set nothing by these things. Notwithstanding all the shows and pretences which many natural men make of respect to Christ, by speaking honorably of Christ in their prayers, and in their common conversation, and by coming to sacraments, and attending other ordinances of Christ; yet indeed they do not set so much by all the glory and excellency of Christ, either the glory of his person, or the glory of his work as a Saviour, as they do by the smallest earthly enjoyment.

I proceed now to mention some *evidences* of the truth of this doctrine.

1. They never give Christ any honor on the account of this his glory and excellency. They may, and often do pay Christ an external and seeming respect; but they do not honor Christ in their hearts. They have no exalting thoughts of Christ, no inward respect or reverence towards him; they have indeed no honorable, respectful thoughts of Christ. All their outward worship is only feigned; none of it arises from any real honor or respect in their hearts towards Christ. It is either only for fashion's sake, and in compliance with custom, or else it is forced, and is what they are driven to by fear; as we read, Psalm lxvi. 3, "Through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee." In the original it is, *shall thine enemies lie unto thee*, i. e., yield a feigned obedience. Through the greatness of Christ's power, and for fear of his wrath, his enemies, who have no respect or honor for him in their hearts, will lie to him, and make a show of respect when they have none.

An unbeliever is not sensible that Christ is worthy of any glory, and therefore does not at all seek the glory of Christ in any thing that he does; he does nothing that he does in religion, out of respect to Christ's glory, but wholly for other ends; which shows that he sees not Christ to be worthy of any glory. Christ is set last and lowest in the heart of an unbeliever. He has high thoughts of other things; he has high thoughts of creature objects and earthly enjoyments, but mean and low thoughts of Christ. He has more honorable thoughts of that which is but mere dirt and dung, than he has of Jesus Christ.

The unbeliever shows the mean and contemptible thoughts that he has of Christ, in refusing to accept of him, and in shutting the door of his heart against him. Christ stands at the door and knocks, and sometimes stands many years knocking at the door of his heart, and he refuses to open to him. Now it certainly shows that men have a very mean thought of a person, when they shut him out of their doors. Unbelievers show the mean and dishonorable thoughts they have of Christ, in that they dare not trust him. They believe not what he says to be true; they will not trust the word of Christ, so far as the word of one of their honest neighbors, or of a servant whom they have found to be faithful. It also appears that they have no real honor for Christ in their hearts, in that they refuse to obey his commands. They do nothing that they do from a spirit of obedience to him; and that external obedience which they render, is but a forced, feigned obedience, and not from any respect to Christ's authority or worthiness to be obeyed.

2. They have no love to him on the account of his glory and excellency. If they did set any thing by all the glory and excellency of Christ, or if they saw any excellency or glory in Christ, they would have some measure of love

to Christ. But the truth is, they see no form or comeliness in Christ, and hence they have no love at all to Christ: an unbeliever never exercises one act of true love to Christ. All that he is told of the glory of Christ, of his divine perfections, of his holiness, his meekness, and grace, has no influence at all to draw forth any love. The display of these things doth no more draw forth love out of the heart of an unbeliever, than it draws forth love from the stones and rocks.

A natural man hath no love of benevolence towards Christ. Notwithstanding all that is declared to him of the excellency of Christ, he has no good will towards Christ. He rejoices not in his glory and happiness; he would not care what became of Christ, if he could but escape hell. If Christ should be dethroned, or made miserable, or should cease to be, he has not so much good will to Christ, as would make him concerned about it. And if the kingdom and interest of Christ in the world should go to ruin, it would be nowise grievous to the unbeliever, provided his own interest could be secure.

So also an unbeliever has no love of complacency in Jesus Christ for his excellency. He takes no delight in the view or consideration of any of that glory and excellency of Christ of which he is told. He is told that it is exceedingly beautiful and glorious; but he sees nothing entertaining in it; he takes no pleasure in the view of any thing that he can see in Christ; the thoughts of the glory of Christ are nowise entertaining to him: he has no delight in the thoughts of it, or in any contemplations upon it. He takes delight in thinking of these and those earthly objects; but when he comes to turn his mind upon Jesus Christ, if ever he so does, this is to him a dry and barren subject; he finds nothing there to feed and delight his soul; no beauty or loveliness to please or gratify him.

3. Unbelievers have no desires after the enjoyment of Christ. If they did set any thing by the glory and excellency of Christ, they would have some desires after him on account of that excellency; especially when he is offered to them, and is from time to time set forth as the proper object of their choice and desires. That which men prize, they are wont to desire, especially if it be represented to them as attainable, and as fit and suitable for them. But unbelievers have no desires after the enjoyment of Christ. They desire to be delivered from hell, but they desire not to enjoy Christ.

They have no idea of any happiness to be had in the enjoyment of Christ: they cannot conceive what happiness there can be in beholding Christ and being with him, in seeing his holiness, and contemplating his wonderful grace and divine glory. They have no relish for any such thing, nor appetite after it.

4. They show that they set nothing by the glory and excellency of Christ, in that they seek not at all a conformity to that glory and excellency. A natural man may seek to be holy, but it is not for holiness' sake, it is only that he may escape wrath. He has no desires after holiness, nor is it indeed holiness that he seeks, because he is all the while an enemy to holiness. A natural man has no desires to have his soul conformed to the glorious beauty and excellency of Christ, nor to have his image upon him.

If he in any degree prized or delighted in the excellencies of Christ, he would necessarily desire to be like him so far as he could. This we see in ourselves and in all men: when we see any qualifications in others that are pleasing to us, and that we set by, it is natural for us to endeavor to imitate them, and to seek to be in those things conformed to those persons. Hence men are apt to learn of those of whom they have a great esteem; they naturally fall into an imitation of their ways and manner of behavior. But natural men feel within

themselves no disposition or inclination to learn of Christ, or to imitate him. Their tempers and dispositions remain quite contrary to Christ's, neither do they grow at all better or more conformed to Christ, but wax worse and worse: 2 Tim. iii. 13, "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse."

APPLICATION.

I. This doctrine may teach us the heinousness of the sin of unbelief, as this sin sets all the glory and excellency of Christ at nought. It often appears strange to natural men, that unbelief should be spoken of as such a heinous and crying sin. They cannot see such evil in it. There are other sins which often trouble natural men's consciences, when this sin of unbelief troubles them not at all, though it be that which brings far greater guilt upon them, than those sins about which they are more troubled.

This that has been now said may show why unbelief is spoken of as such a heinous sin, as it is, John iii. 18, and chap. xvi. 9, and 1 John v. 10. For thereby all the glory and excellency of Christ is set at nought, though it be so great, though it be infinite, though it be the glory of the Godhead itself, and though it has been so gloriously manifested in what Christ has done and suffered. Natural men in their unbelief cast contempt on all this glory, and tread it under foot, as being nothing worth. Their unbelief treats the excellency of Christ as being of less value than the meanest earthly enjoyments.

II. This doctrine may convict natural men in four particulars.

1. Hereby you may be convinced of the greatness of your guilt. Consider how great and excellent that person is, whom you thus set at nought. Contempt of any person is heinous in proportion to the worthiness and dignity of the person contemned. Though we are but men, and worms of the dust, and very vile, sinful creatures; yet we take it grievously when we are despised. Consider how you yourselves are ready to resent it, when any of your neighbors seem to slight you, and set light by what you say and do, and to make no account of it, but to treat you as if you were good for nothing, or not worth minding. Do you take this well of your neighbors and equals, when you observe any thing of this nature? Are you not ready to look upon it with resentment, to think very ill of it, and to judge that you have great cause to be offended?

But if it be such a crime to despise you and set you at nought, what is it to set at nought the eternal, infinitely glorious Son of God, in comparison with whom you, and all nations, are nothing, and less than nothing, and vanity? You dislike it much to be contemned by your equals; but you would take it yet more grievously to be despised by your inferiors, by those who on every account you much excel.—What a crime is it then for a vile, sinful worm, to set at nought him who is the brightness of the glory of the King of kings!

It would be a crime inexpressibly heinous, to set *little* by the glory and excellency of such a person; but it is more so, to set *nothing at all* by it, as you do. You have no value at all for it, as has been shown. And this is the more aggravated, as Christ is a person whom you so much need, and as he came into the world out of infinite grace to sinners, to lay down his life to deliver them from hell, and purchase for them eternal glory. How much has Christ done and suffered, that you might have opportunity to be saved! Yet you set nothing by it all; you set nothing by the blood of Christ, even by that blood that was shed for such poor sinners as you are, and that is offered to you for your salvation. But you trample under foot the blood of the Son of God. If Christ had come into the world only *to teach* us, it would have been a heinous thing

to trample under foot his word and instructions. But when he came to die for us, how much more heinous is it to trample under foot his blood!

Men take it hardly to have any of their qualifications or actions despised, which they esteem commendable. But especially do they highly resent it when others slight their kindness. And above all, when they have put themselves out of their way, and have denied themselves, and suffered considerably to do others a kindness; then to have their kindness despised and set at nought, is what men would above all things resent. How heinous then is it, and how exceedingly provoking to God must it be, thus to set at nought so great kindness and love of Christ, when, from love to sinners, he suffered so much!

Consider how highly the angels, who are so much above you, do set by the glory and excellency of Christ, by which you set nothing. They admire and adore the glory of Christ, and cease not day nor night to praise the same in the most exalted strains. Rev. v. 11, 12, "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." The saints admire the excellency of Christ, and the glorious angels admire it, and every creature in heaven and earth, but only you unbelieving children of men.

Consider not only how much the angels set by the glory of Christ, but how much God himself sets by it; for he is the darling of Heaven, he was eternally God's delight; and because of his glory God hath thought him worthy to be appointed the heir of all things, and hath seen fit to ordain that all men *should honor the Son even as they honor the Father.*—Is he thus worthy of the infinite esteem and love of God himself? And is he worthy of no esteem from you?

2. Hereby you may be convinced of your danger. You must needs think that such guilt will bring great wrath: doubtless God is dreadfully provoked by your thus despising Jesus Christ. Dreadful destruction is denounced in Scripture against those that despise only the disciples of Christ, Matt. xviii. 6. What destruction then will come on them that despise all the glorious excellency of Christ himself!

Consider that you not only have no value for all the glory and excellency of Christ; but you are enemies to him on that very account. The very ground of that enmity and opposition which there is between your hearts and Jesus Christ, is the glorious perfections and excellencies that there are in Jesus Christ. By being such a holy and excellent Saviour, he is contrary to your lusts and corruptions: if there were a Saviour offered to you that was agreeable to your corrupt nature, such a Saviour you would fall in with the offer of; such a Saviour you would accept. But, Christ being a Saviour of such purity, holiness, and divine perfection, this is the cause why you have no inclination to him, but are offended in him.

Instead of being a precious stone in your eyes, he is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to you. That he is a Saviour who hath manifested such divine perfections in what he hath done and suffered, is one principal reason why you set nothing by him. Consider how provoking this must needs be to God the Father, who has given his only begotten Son for your salvation; and what wrath it merits from the Son whom you thus treat. And consider how you will hereafter bear this wrath.

Consider that however Christ be set at nought by you, yet he shall be the head of the corner, and that even with respect to you. Though you set him low,

yet he shall be exalted with respect to you. It is but a vain thing for you to make light of Christ and treat him with contempt. How much soever you contemn him, you cannot break his bands asunder, nor cast his cords from you. You will still be in his hands. While you despise Christ, God will despise you, and the Lord will have you in derision. God will set his king on his holy hill of Zion in spite of all his enemies, Psalm ii. 1—6. Though you say we will not have this man to reign over us, yet Christ will rule over you: Psalm cx. 2, "Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies." If you will not submit to the sceptre of his grace, you shall be subject to the rod of his wrath, and he will rule you with a rod of iron, Psalm ii. 9, 10, 11, 12.

3. You may hence be led to see how worthless many of those things in yourselves are, that you have been ready to make much of. Particularly if it be so that you set nothing by all the glory of Christ, then what are those desires that you have after Christ good for? And that willingness that you think you find to come to Christ?—Sinners are often wont to excuse themselves in their unbelief with this, that they see not but that they are willing to come to Christ, and would gladly come to him if they could, and have great desires to come to him. And they make much of such a willingness and such desires, as though God was unjust to punish them for not coming to Christ, when they would gladly come to Christ if they could. But this doctrine shows that your willingness and desires to come to Christ are not worthy to be mentioned as any excuse: for they are not from any respect to Christ, but are merely forced: you at the same time set Christ at nought; or set nothing by all his excellency and glory.

So you may hence learn the worthlessness of all your pains and endeavors after Christ. When sinners have taken a great deal of pains to get an interest in Christ, they are wont to make a righteousness of it; little considering that at the very time they are taking so much pains to get an interest in Christ, they set nothing at all by Christ for any glory or excellency that there is in him; but set him wholly at nought, and seek him out of respect to their own interest.

4. Hence learn how justly God might forever refuse to give you an interest in Christ. For why should God give you any part or interest in him whom you set at nought, all whose glory and excellency you value not in the least, but rather trample it under your feet, and prefer the dirt before it?

Why should God ever give you any interest in him whom you so despise? Seeing you despise him, how justly might you be obliged to go without any interest in him! How justly might you be refused any part in that precious stone, whose preciousness you make no account of, and esteem no more than that of the stones of the streets!—Is God obliged to cast such a pearl before swine who will trample it under their feet! Is God obliged to make you possessors of his infinitely glorious and dear Son, when at the same time you count him not worth the having, for the sake of any worth or excellency that there is in him; but merely because you cannot escape hell without him?

SERMON XXI

THE MANNER IN WHICH THE SALVATION OF THE SOUL IS TO BE SOUGHT.

GENESIS vi. 22.—Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he.

CONCERNING these words, I would observe three things:

1. What it was that God commanded Noah, to which these words refer It was the building of an ark according to the particular direction of God, against the time when the flood of waters should come; and the laying up of food for himself, his family, and the other animals, which were to be preserved in the ark. We have the particular commands which God gave him respecting this affair, from the 14th verse, "Make thee an ark of gopher wood," &c.

2. We may observe the *special design* of the work which God had enjoined upon Noah: it was to save himself and his family, when the rest of the world should be drowned. See ver. 17, 18.

We may observe Noah's obedience. He obeyed God: *thus did Noah.* And his obedience was thorough and universal: *according to* ALL *that God commanded him, so did he.* He not only began, but he went through his work, which God had commanded him to undertake for his salvation from the flood. To this obedience the apostle refers in Heb. xi. 7, "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house."

DOCTRINE.

We should be willing to engage in and go through great undertakings, in order to our own salvation.

The building of the ark, which was enjoined upon Noah, that he and his family might be saved, was a great undertaking: the ark was a building of vast size; the length of it being three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits. A cubit, till of late, was by learned men reckoned to be equal to a foot and a half of our measure. But lately some learned men of our nation have travelled into Egypt, and other ancient countries, and have measured some ancient buildings there, which are of several thousand years standing, and of which ancient histories give us the dimensions in cubits; particularly the pyramids of Egypt, which are standing entire at this day. By measuring these, and by comparing the measure in feet with the ancient accounts of their measure in cubits, a cubit is found to be almost two and twenty inches. Therefore learned men more lately reckon a cubit much larger than they did formerly. So that the ark, reckoned so much larger every way, will appear to be almost of double the bulk which was formerly ascribed to it. According to this computation of the cubit, it was more than five hundred and fifty feet long, about ninety feet broad, and about fifty feet in height.

To build such a structure, with all those apartments and divisions in it which were necessary, and in such a manner as to be fit to float upon the water for so long a time, was *then* a great undertaking. It took Noah, with all the workmen he employed, a hundred and twenty years, or thereabouts, to build it. For so long it was, that the Spirit of God strove, and the long-suffering God waited on the old world, as you may see in Gen. vi. 3: "My Spirit shall not always

strive with man; yet his days shall be a hundred and twenty years" Ah this while the ark was a preparing, as appears by 1 Pet. iii. 20: "When once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing." It was a long time that Noah constantly employed himself in this business. Men would esteem that undertaking very great, which should keep them constantly employed even for one half of that time.—Noah must have had a great and constant care upon his mind for these one hundred and twenty years, in superintending this work, and in seeing that all was done exactly according to the directions which God had given him.

Not only was Noah himself continually employed, but it required a great number of workmen to be constantly employed, during all that time, in procuring, and collecting, and fitting the materials, and in putting them together in due form. How great a thing was it for Noah to undertake such a work! For beside the continual care and labor, it was a work of vast expense. It is not probable that any of that wicked generation would put to a finger to help forward such a work, which doubtless they believed was merely the fruit of Noah's folly, without full wages. Noah must needs have been very rich, to be able to bear the expense of such a work, and to pay so many workmen for so long a time. It would have been a very great expense for a prince; and doubtless Noah was very rich, as Abraham and Job were afterwards. But it is probable that Noah spent all his worldly substance in this work, thus manifesting his faith in the word of God, by selling all he had, as believing there would surely come a flood, which would destroy all; so that if he should keep what he had, it would be of no service to him. Herein he has set us an example, showing us how we ought to sell all for our salvation.

Noah's undertaking was of great difficulty, as it exposed him to the continual reproaches of all his neighbors, for that whole one hundred and twenty years. None of them believed what he told them of a flood which was about to drown the world. For a man to undertake such a vast piece of work, under a notion that it should be the means of saving him when the world should be destroyed, it made him the continual laughing-stock of the world. When he was about to hire workmen, doubtless all laughed at him, and we may suppose, that though the workmen consented to work for wages, yet they laughed at the folly of him who employed them. When the ark was begun, we may suppose that every one that passed by and saw such a huge hulk stand there, laughed at it, calling it *Noah's folly*.

In these days, men are with difficulty brought to do or submit to that which makes them the objects of the reproach of all their neighbors. Indeed, if while *some* reproach them, *others* stand by them and honor them, this will support them. But it is very difficult for a man to go on in a way wherein he makes himself the laughing-stock of the *whole* world, and wherein he can find none who do not despise him. Where is the man that can stand the shock of such a trial for twenty years?

But in such an undertaking as this, Noah, at the divine direction, engaged and went through it, that himself and his family might be saved from the common destruction which was shortly about to come on the world. He began, and also made an end: "According to all that God commanded him, so did he." Length of time did not weary him: he did not grow weary of his vast expense. He stood the shock of the derision of all his neighbors, and of all the world, year after year: he did not grow weary of being their laughing-stock, so as to give over his enterprise; but persevered in it till the ark was finished. After this, he was at the trouble and charge of procuring stores for the main

tenance of his family, and of all the various kinds of creatures, for so long a time. Such an undertaking he engaged in and went through in order to a *temporal* salvation. How great an undertaking then should men be willing to engage in and go through in order to their *eternal* salvation! A salvation from an eternal deluge; from being overwhelmed with the billows of God's wrath, of which Noah's flood was but a shadow.

I shall particularly handle this doctrine under the three following propositions

I. There is a work or business which must be undertaken and accomplished by men, if they would be saved.

II. This business is a *great* undertaking.

III. Men should be willing to enter upon and go through this undertaking, though it be great, seeing it is for their *own salvation.*

I. Prop. There is a work or business which men must enter upon and accomplish, in order to their salvation.—Men have no reason to expect to be saved in idleness, or to go to heaven in a way of doing nothing. No; in order to it, there is a great work, which must be not only begun, but finished.—I shall speak upon this proposition, in answer to two inquiries.

Inq. 1. What is this work or business which must be undertaken and accomplished in order to the salvation of men?

Ans. It is the work of seeking salvation in a way of constant observance of all the duty to which God directs us in his word. If we would be saved, we must seek salvation. For although men do not obtain heaven of themselves, yet they do not go thither accidentally, or without any intention or endeavors of their own. God, in his word, hath directed men to seek their salvation as they would hope to obtain it. There is a race that is set before them, which they must run, and in that race come off victors, in order to their winning the prize.

The Scriptures have told us what particular duties must be performed by us in order to our salvation. It is not sufficient that men seek their salvation only in the observance of *some* of those duties; but they must be observed universally. The work we have to do is not an obedience only to some, but to all the commands of God; a compliance with every institution of worship; a diligent use of all the appointed means of grace; a doing of all duty towards God and towards man—It is not sufficient that men have some respect to all the commands of God, and that they may be said to seek their salvation in some sort of observance of all the commands; but they must be devoted to it. They must not make this a business by the by, or a thing in which they are negligent and careless, or which they do with a slack hand; but it must be their great business, being attended to as their great concern. They must not only seek, but strive; they must do what their hand findeth to do with their might, as men thoroughly engaged in their minds, and influenced and set forward by great desire and strong resolution. They must act as those that see so much of the importance of religion above all other things, that every thing else must be as an occasional affair, and nothing must stand in competition with its duties. This must be *the one* thing they do; Phil. iii. 13, "This one thing I do."—It must be the business to which they make all other affairs give place, and to which they are ready to make other things a sacrifice. They must be ready to part with pleasures and honor, estate and life, and to sell all, that they may successfully accomplish this business.

It is required of every man, that he not only do *something* in this business, but that he should *devote* himself to it; which implies that he should give up himself to it, all his affairs, and all his temporal enjoyments. This is the import

of taking up the cross, of taking Christ's yoke upon us, and of denying ourselves to follow Christ. The rich young man, who came kneeling to Christ to know what he should do to be saved, Mark x. 17, in some sense sought salvation, but did not obtain it. In some sense he kept all the commands from his youth up; but was not cordially devoted to this business. He had not made a sacrifice to it of all his enjoyments, as appeared when Christ came to try him; he would not part with his estate for him.

It is not only necessary that men should seem to be very much engaged, and appear as if they were devoted to their duty for a little while; but there must be a *constant* devotedness, in a persevering way, as Noah was to the business of the building the ark, going on with that great, difficult, and expensive affair, till it was finished, and till the flood came. Men must not only be diligent in the use of the means of grace, and be anxiously engaged to escape eternal ruin, till they obtain hope and comfort; but afterwards they must persevere in the duties of religion, till the flood come, the flood of death. Not only must the faculties, strength, and possessions of men be devoted to this work, but also their time and their lives; they must give up their whole lives to it, even to the very day when God causes the storms and floods to come. This is the work or business which men have to do in order to their salvation.

Inq. 2. Why is it needful that men should undertake to go through such a work in order to their salvation?

Ans. 1. Not to *merit* salvation, or to recommend them to the saving mercy of God. Men are not saved on the *account* of any work of theirs, and yet they are not saved *without* works. If we merely consider what it is for which, or on the account of which, men are saved, no work at all in men is necessary to their salvation. In this respect they are saved wholly without any work of theirs: Tit. iii. 5, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." We must indeed be saved on the account of works; but not our own. It is on account of the works which Christ hath done for us. Works are the fixed price of eternal life; it is fixed by an eternal, unalterable rule of righteousness. But since the fall there is no hope of *our* doing these works, without salvation offered freely without money and without price. But,

2. Though it be not needful that we do any thing to merit salvation, which Christ hath fully merited for all who believe in him; yet God, for wise and holy ends, hath appointed, that we should come to final salvation in no other way, but that of good works done by us.

God did not save Noah on account of the labor and expense he was at in building the ark. Noah's salvation from the flood was an instance of the free and distinguishing mercy of God. Nor did God stand in need of Noah's care, or cost, or labor, to build an ark. The same power which created the world, and which brought the flood of waters upon the earth, could have made the ark in an instant, without any care or cost to Noah, or any of the labor of those many workmen who were employed for so long a time. Yet God was pleased to appoint, that Noah should be saved in this way. So God hath appointed that man should not be saved without his undertaking and doing this work of which I have been speaking; and therefore we are commanded "to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling," Philip. ii. 12.

There are many wise ends to be answered by the establishment of such a work as prerequisite to salvation. The glory of God requires it. For although God stand in no need of any thing that men do to recommend them to his saving mercy, yet it would reflect much on the glory of God's wisdom and holiness, to

bestow salvation on men in such a way as tends to encourage them in sloth and wickedness; or in any other way than that which tends to promote diligence and holiness. Man was made capable of action, with many powers of both body and mind fitting him for it. He was made for business and not idleness; and the main business for which he was made, was that of religion. Therefore it becomes the wisdom of God to bestow salvation and happiness on man, in such a way as tends most to promote his end in this respect, and to stir him up to a diligent use of his faculties and talents.

It becomes the wisdom of God so to order it, that things of great value and importance should not be obtained without great labor and diligence. Much human learning and great moral accomplishments are not to be obtained without care and labor. It is wisely so ordered, in order to maintain in man a due sense of the value of those things which are excellent. If great things were in common easily obtained, it would have a tendency to cause men to slight and undervalue them. Men commonly despise those things which are cheap, and which are obtained without difficulty.

Although the work of obedience performed by men, be not necessary in order to merit salvation; yet it is necessary in order to their being prepared for it. Men cannot be prepared for salvation without seeking it in such a way as hath been described. This is necessary in order that they have a proper sense of their own necessities, and unworthiness; and in order that they be prepared and disposed to prize salvation when bestowed, and be properly thankful to God for it. The requisition of so great a work in order to our salvation is no way inconsistent with the freedom of the offer of salvation; as after all it is both offered and bestowed without any respect to our work, as the price or meritorious cause of our salvation, as I have already explained. Besides, salvation bestowed in this way is better for us, more for our advantage and happiness both in this and the future world, than if it were given without this requisition

II. Prop. This work or business, which must be done in order to the salvation of men, is a *great* undertaking. It often appears so to men upon whom it is urged. Utterly to break off from all their sins, and to give up themselves forever to the business of religion, without making a reserve of any one lust, submitting to and complying with every command of God, in all cases, and persevering therein, appears to many so great a thing, that they are in vain urged to undertake it. In so doing it seems to them, that they should give up themselves to a perpetual bondage. The greater part of men therefore choose to put it off, and keep it at as great a distance as they can. They cannot bear to think of entering immediately on such a hard service, and rather than do it, they will run the risk of eternal damnation, by putting it off to an uncertain future opportunity.

Although the business of religion is far from really being as it appears to such men, for the devil will be sure, if he can, to represent it in false colors to sinners, and make it appear as black and as terrible as he can; yet it is indeed a great business, a great undertaking, and it is fit that all who are urged to it, should count the cost beforehand, and be sensible of the difficulty attending it. For though the devil discourages many from this undertaking, by representing it to be more difficult than it really is; yet with others he takes a contrary course, and flatters them it is a very easy thing, a trivial business, which may be done at any time when they please, and so emboldens them to defer it from that consideration. But let none conceive any other notion of that business of religion, which is absolutely necessary to their salvation, than that it is a great undertaking It is so on the following accounts.

1. It is a business of great *labor* and *care*. There are many commands to be obeyed, many duties to be done, duties to God, duties to our neighbor, and duties to ourselves.—There is much opposition in the way of these duties from *without*. There is a subtle and powerful adversary laying all manner of blocks in the way. There are innumerable temptations of Satan to be resisted and repelled. There is great opposition from the world, innumerable snares laid on every side, many rocks and mountains to be passed over, many streams to be passed through, and many flatteries and enticements from a vain world to be resisted. There is a great opposition from *within;* a dull and sluggish heart, which is exceedingly averse from that activity in religion which is necessary; a carnal heart, which is averse from religion and spiritual exercises, and continually drawing the contrary way; and a proud and a deceitful heart, in which corruption will be exerting itself in all manner of ways. So that nothing can be done to any effect without a most strict and careful watch, great labor and strife.

2. It is a *constant* business.—In that business which requires great labor, men love now and then to have a space of relaxation, that they may rest from their extraordinary labor. But this is a business which must be followed every day. Luke ix. 23, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross *daily* and follow me."—We must never give ourselves any relaxation from this business; it must be continually prosecuted day after day. If sometimes we make a great stir and bustle concerning religion, but then lay all aside to take our ease, and do so from time to time, it will be of no good effect; we had even as good do nothing at all. The business of religion so followed is never like to come to any good issue, nor is the work ever like to be accomplished to any good purpose.

3. It is a great undertaking, as it is an undertaking of *great expense*.—We must therein sell all: we must follow this business at the expense of all our unlawful pleasures and delights, at the expense of our carnal ease, often at the expense of our substance, of our credit among men, the good will of our neighbors, at the expense of all our earthly friends, and even at the expense of life itself. Herein it is like Noah's undertaking to build the ark, which, as hath been shown, was a costly undertaking: it was expensive to his reputation among men, exposing him to be the continual laughing-stock of all his neighbors and of the whole world: and it was expensive to his estate, and probably cost him all that he had.

4. Sometimes the fear, trouble, and exercise of mind, which are undergone respecting this business, and the salvation of the soul, are great and long continued, before any comfort is obtained. Sometimes persons in this situation labor long in the dark, and sometimes, as it were, in the very fire, they having great distress of conscience, great fears, and many perplexing temptations, before they obtain light and comfort to make their care and labor more easy to them. They sometimes earnestly, and for a long time, seek comfort, but find it not, because they seek it not in a right manner, nor in the right objects. God therefore hides his face. They cry, but God doth not answer their prayers. They strive, but all seems in vain. They seem to themselves not at all to get forward, or nearer to a deliverance from sin: but to go backward, rather than forward. They see no glimmerings of light: things rather appear darker and darker. Insomuch that they are often ready to be discouraged, and to sink under the weight of their present distress, and under the prospect of future misery. In this situation, and under these views, some are almost driven to despair.

Many, after they have obtained some saving comfort, are again involved in

darkness and trouble. It is with them as it was with the Christian Hebrews, Heb. x. 32, "After ye were illuminated ye endured a great fight of afflictions Some through a melancholy habit and distemper of body, together with Satan's temptations, spend a great part of their lives in distress and darkness, even after they have had some saving comfort.

5. It is a business which, by reason of the many difficulties, snares, and dangers that attend it, requires much instruction, consideration, and *counsel.* There is no business wherein men stand in need of counsel more than in this. It is a difficult undertaking, a hard matter to proceed aright in it. There are ten thousand wrong ways, which men may take; there are many labyrinths wherein many poor souls are entangled and never find the way out; there are many rocks on which thousands of souls have suffered shipwreck, for want of having steered aright.

Men of themselves know not how to proceed in this business, any more than the children of Israel in the wilderness knew where to go without the guidance of the pillar of cloud and fire. There is great need that they search the Scriptures, and give diligent heed to the instructions and directions contained in them, as to a light shining in a dark place; and that they ask counsel of those skilled in these matters. And there is no business in which men have so much need of seeking to God by prayer, for his counsel, and that he would lead them in the right way, and show them the strait gate. "For strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it;" yea, there are none that find it without direction from heaven.

The building of the ark was a work of great difficulty on this account, that Noah's wisdom was not sufficient to direct him how to make such a building as should be a sufficient security against such a flood, and which should be a convenient dwelling-place for himself, his family, and all the various kinds of beasts, and birds, and creeping things. Nor could he ever have known how to construct this building, had not God directed him.

6. This business never ends till *life* ends. They that undertake this laborious, careful, expensive, self-denying business, must not expect to rest from their labors, till death shall have put an end to them. The long continuance of the work which Noah undertook was what especially made it a great undertaking. This also was what made the travel of the children of Israel through the wilderness appear so great to them, that it was continued for so long a time. Their spirits failed, they were discouraged, and had not a heart to go through with so great an undertaking.

But such is *this* business that it runs parallel with life, whether it be longer or shorter. Although we should live to a great age, our race and warfare will not be finished till death shall come. We must not expect that an end will be put to our labor, and care, and strife, by any hope of a good estate which we may obtain. Past attainments and past success will not excuse us from what remains for the future, nor will they make future constant labor and care not necessary to our salvation.

III. Men should be willing to engage in and go through this business, however great and difficult it may seem to them, seeing it is for their *own salvation.* Because,

1. A deluge of wrath will *surely come.* The inhabitants of the old world would not believe that there would come such a flood of waters upon the earth, as that of which Noah told them, though he told them often; neither would they take any care to avoid the destruction. Yet such a deluge did come; nothing of all those things of which Noah had forewarned them, failed.

So there will surely come a more dreadful deluge of divine wrath on this wicked world. We are often forewarned of it in the Scriptures, and the world, as then, doth not believe any such thing. Yet the threatening will as certainly be accomplished, as the threatening denounced against the old world. A day of wrath is coming; it will come at its appointed season; it will not tarry, it shall not be delayed one moment beyond its appointed time.

2. All such as do not seasonably undertake and go through the great work mentioned will surely be *swallowed up* in this deluge. When the floods of wrath shall come, they will universally overwhelm the wicked world: all such as shall not have taken care to prepare an ark, will surely be swallowed up in it; they will find no other way of escape. In vain shall salvation be expected from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains; for the flood shall be above the tops of all the mountains. Or if they shall hide themselves in the caves and dens of the mountains, there the waters of the flood will find them out, and there shall they miserably perish.

As those of the old world who were not in the ark perished, Gen. vii. 21, 23, so all who shall not have secured to themselves a place in the spiritual ark of the gospel, shall perish much more miserably than the old world. Doubtless the inhabitants of the old world had many contrivances to save themselves. Some, we may suppose, ascended to the tops of their houses, being driven out of one story to another, till at last they perished. Others climbed to the tops of high towers; who yet were washed thence by the boisterous waves of the rising flood. Some climbed to the tops of trees; others to the tops of mountains, and especially of the highest mountains. But all was in vain; the flood sooner or later swallowed them all up; only Noah and his family, who had taken care to prepare an ark, remained alive.

So it will doubtless be at the end of the world, when Christ shall come to judge the world in righteousness. Some, when they shall look up and see him coming in the clouds of heaven, shall hide themselves in closets, and secret places in their houses. Others flying to the caves and dens of the earth, shall attempt to hide themselves there. Others shall call upon the rocks and mountains to fall on them, and cover them from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.—So it will be after the sentence is pronounced, and wicked men see that terrible fire coming, which is to burn this world forever, and which will be a deluge of fire, and will burn the earth even to the bottoms of the mountains, and to its very centre. Deut. xxxii. 22, "For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn to the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains." I say, when the wicked shall, after the sentence, see this great fire beginning to kindle, and to take hold of this earth; there will be many contrivances devised by them to escape, some flying to caves and holes in the earth, some hiding themselves in one place, and some in another. But let them hide themselves where they will, or let them do what they will, it will be utterly in vain. Every cave shall burn as an oven, the rocks and mountains shall melt with fervent heat, and if they could creep down to the very centre of the earth, still the heat would follow them, and rage with as much vehemence there, as on the very surface.

So when wicked men, who neglect their great work in their lifetime, who are not willing to go through the difficulty and labor of this work, draw near to death, they sometimes do many things to escape death, and put forth many endeavors to lengthen out their lives at least a little longer. For this end they send for physicians, and perhaps many are consulted, and their prescriptions are

punctually observed. They also use many endeavors to save their souls from hell. They cry to God; they confess their past sins; they promise future reformation; and, Oh! what would they not give for some small addition to their lives, or some hope of future happiness! But all proves in vain: God hath numbered their days and finished them; and as they have sinned away the day of grace, they must even bear the consequence, and forever lie down in sorrow.

3. The destruction, when it shall come, will be *infinitely terrible.* The destruction of the old world by the flood was terrible; but that eternal destruction which is coming on the wicked is infinitely more so. That flood of waters was but an image of this awful flood of divine vengeance. When the waters poured down, more like spouts or cataracts, or the fall of a great river, than like rain; what an awful appearance was there of the wrath of God! This however is but an image of that terrible outpouring of the wrath of God which shall be forever, yea forever and ever, on wicked men. And when the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the waters burst forth out of the ground, as though they had issued out of the womb (Job xxxviii. 8), this was an image of the mighty breakings forth of God's wrath, which shall be, when the floodgates of wrath shall be drawn up. How may we suppose that the wicked of the old world repented that they had not hearkened to the warnings which Noah had given them, when they saw these dreadful things, and saw that they must perish! How much more will you repent your refusing to hearken to the gracious warnings of the gospel, when you shall see the fire of God's wrath against you, pouring down from heaven, and bursting on all sides out of the bowels of the earth!

4. Though the work which is necessary in order to man's salvation be a great work, yet it is not impossible. What was required of Noah, doubtless appeared a very great and difficult undertaking. Yet he undertook it with resolution, and he was carried through it. So if we undertake this work with the same good will and resolution, we shall undoubtedly be successful. However difficult it be, yet multitudes have gone through it, and have obtained salvation by the means. It is not a work beyond the faculties of our nature, nor beyond the opportunities which God giveth us. If men will but take warning and hearken to counsel, if they will but be sincere and in good earnest, be seasonable in their work, take their opportunities, use their advantages, be steadfast and not wavering; they shall not fail.

APPLICATION.

The use I would make of this doctrine, is to exhort all to undertake and go through this great work, which they have to do in order to their salvation, and this, let the work seem ever so great and difficult. If your nature be averse to it, and there seems to be very frightful things in the way, so that your heart is ready to fail at the prospect; yet seriously consider what has been said, and act a wise part. Seeing it is for yourselves, for your own salvation; seeing it is for so great a salvation, for your deliverance from eternal destruction; and seeing it is of such absolute necessity in order to your salvation, that the deluge of divine wrath will come, and there will be no escaping it without preparing an ark; is it not best for you to undertake the work, engage in it with your might, and go through it, though this cannot be done without great labor, care, difficulty, and expense?

I would by no means flatter you concerning this work, or go about to make you believe, that you shall find an easy light business of it: no, I would not

nave you expect any such thing. I would have you sit down and count the cost; and if you cannot find it in your hearts to engage in a great, hard, laborious, and expensive undertaking, and to persevere in it to the end of life, pretend not to be religious. Indulge yourselves in your ease; follow your pleasures; eat, drink, and be merry; even conclude to go to hell in that way, and never make any more pretences of seeking your salvation. Here consider several things in particular.

1. How *often* you have been warned of the approaching flood of God's wrath. How frequently you have been told of hell, heard the threatenings of the word of God set before you, and been warned to flee from the wrath to come. It is with you as it was with the inhabitants of the old world. Noah warned them abundantly of the approaching flood, and counselled them to take care for their safety, 1 Pet. iii. 19, 20. Noah warned them in words; and he preached to them. He warned them also in his actions. His building the ark, which took him so long a time, and in which he employed so many hands, was a standing warning to them. All the blows of the hammer and axe, during the progress of that building, were so many calls and warnings to the old world, to take care for their preservation from the approaching destruction. Every knock of the workmen was a knock of Jesus Christ at the door of their hearts: but they would not hearken. All these warnings, though repeated every day, and continued for so long a time, availed nothing.

Now, is it not much so with you, as it was with them? How often have you been warned! How have you heard the warning knocks of the gospel, Sabbath after Sabbath, for these many years! Yet how have some of you no more regarded them than the inhabitants of the old world regarded the noise of the workmen's tools in Noah's ark!

Obj. But here possibly it may be objected by some, that though it be true they have often been told of hell, yet they never saw any thing of it, and therefore they cannot realize it that there is any such place. They have often heard of hell, and are told that wicked men, when they die, go to a most dreadful place of torment; that hereafter there will be a day of judgment, and that the world will be consumed by fire. But how do they know that it is really so? How do they know what becomes of those wicked men that die? None of them come back to tell them. They have nothing to depend on but the word which they hear. And how do they know that all is not a cunningly-devised fable?

Ans. The sinners of the old world had the very same objection against what Noah told them of a flood about to drown the world. Yet the bare word of God proved to be sufficient evidence that such a thing was coming. What was the reason that none of the many millions then upon earth believed what Noah said, but this, that it was a strange thing, that no such thing had ever before been known? And what a strange story must that of Noah have appeared to them, wherein he told them of a deluge of waters above the tops of the mountains! Therefore it is said, Heb. xi. 7, that "Noah was warned of God of things not seen as yet." It is probable, none could conceive how it could be that the whole world should be drowned in a flood of waters; and all were ready to ask, where there was water enough for it; and by what means it should be brought upon the earth. Noah did not tell them how it should be brought to pass; he only told them that God had said that it should be: and that proved to be enough. The event showed their folly in not depending on the mere word of God, who was able, who knew how to bring it to pass, ar who could not lie.

In like manner the word of God will prove true, in threatening a flood of eternal wrath to overwhelm all the wicked. You will believe it when the event shall prove it, when it shall be too late to profit by the belief. The word of God will never fail; nothing is so sure as that: heaven and earth shall pass away, but the word of God shall not pass away. It is firmer than mountains of brass. At the end, the vision will speak and not lie. The decree shall bring forth, and all wicked men shall know that God is the Lord, that he is a God of truth, and that they are fools who will not depend on his word. The wicked of the old world counted Noah a fool for depending so much on the word of God, as to put himself to all the fatigue and expense of building the ark; but the event showed that they themselves were the fools, and that he was wise.

2. Consider that the Spirit of God will not *always* strive with you; nor will his long-suffering always wait upon you. So God said concerning the inhabitants of the old world, Gen. vi. 3: "My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh; yet his days shall be a hundred and twenty years." All this while God was striving with them. It was a day of grace with them, and God's long-suffering all this while waited upon them: 1 Pet. iii. 20, "Which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing." All this while they had an opportunity to escape, if they would but hearken and believe God.

Even after the ark was finished, which seems to have been but little before the flood came, still there was an opportunity; the door of the ark stood open for some time. There was some time during which Noah was employed in laying up stores in the ark. Even then it was not too late; the door of the ark yet stood open.—About a week before the flood came, Noah was commanded to begin to gather in the beasts and birds. During this last week still the door of the ark stood open. But on the very day that the flood began to come, while the rain was yet withheld, Noah and his wife, his three sons, and their wives, went into the ark; and we are told, Gen. vii. 16, that "God shut him in." Then the day of God's patience was past; the door of the ark was shut; God himself, who shuts and no man opens, shut the door. Then all hope of their escaping the flood was past; it was too late to repent that they had not hearkened to Noah's warnings, and had not entered into the ark while the door stood open.

After Noah and his family had entered into the ark, and God had shut them in, after the windows of heaven were opened, and they saw how the waters were poured down out of heaven, we may suppose that many of those who were near came running to the door of the ark, knocking, and crying most piteously for entrance. But it was too late; God himself had shut the door, and Noah had no license, and probably no power, to open it. We may suppose, they stood knocking and calling, *Open to us, open to us; O let us in; we beg that we may be let in.* And probably some of them pleaded old acquaintance with Noah; that they had always been his neighbors, and had even helped him to build the ark. But all was in vain. There they stood till the waters of the flood came, and without mercy swept them away from the door of the ark.

So it will be with you, if you continue to refuse to hearken to the warnings which are given you. Now God is striving with you; now he is warning you of the approaching flood, and calling upon you Sabbath after Sabbath. Now the door of the ark stands open. But God's Spirit will not always strive with you; his long-suffering will not always wait upon you. There is an appointed day of God's patience, which is as certainly limited as it was to the old world.

God hath set your bounds, which you cannot pass. Though now warnings are continued in plenty, yet there will be *last* knocks and *last* calls, the last that ever you shall hear. When the appointed time shall be elapsed, God will shut the door, and you shall never see it open again; for God shutteth, and no man openeth.—If you improve not your opportunity before that time, you will cry in vain, "Lord, Lord, open to us," Matt. xxv. 11, and Luke xiii. 25, &c. While you shall stand at the door with your piteous cries, the flood of God's wrath will come upon you, overwhelm you, and you shall not escape. The tempest shall carry you away without mercy, and you shall be forever swallowed up and lost.

3. Consider how *mighty* the billows of divine wrath will be when they shall come. The waters of Noah's flood were very great. The deluge was vast; it was very deep; the billows reached fifteen cubits above the highest mountains; and it was an ocean which had no shore; signifying the greatness of that wrath which is coming on wicked men in another world, which will be like a mighty flood of waters overwhelming them, and rising vastly high over their heads, with billows reaching to the very heavens. Those billows will be higher and heavier than mountains on their poor souls. The wrath of God will be an ocean without shores, as Noah's flood was: it will be misery that will have no end.

The misery of the damned in hell can be better represented by nothing, than by a deluge of misery, a mighty deluge of wrath, which will be ten thousand times worse than a deluge of waters; for it will be a deluge of liquid fire, as in the Scriptures it is called a lake of fire and brimstone.—At the end of the world all the wicked shall be swallowed up in a vast deluge of fire, which shall be as great and as mighty as Noah's deluge of water. See 2 Pet. iii. 5, 6, 7. After that the wicked will have mighty billows of fire and brimstone eternally rolling over their poor souls, and their miserable tormented bodies. Those billows may be called vast liquid mountains of fire and brimstone. And when one billow shall have gone over their heads, another shall follow, without intermission, giving them no rest day nor night to all eternity.

4. This flood of wrath will probably come upon you suddenly, when you shall think little of it, and it shall seem far from you. So the flood came upon the old world. See Matt. xxiv. 36, &c. Probably many of them were surprised in the night by the waters bursting suddenly in at their doors, or under the foundations of their houses, coming in upon them in their beds. For when the fountains of the great deep were broken up, the waters, as observed before, burst forth in mighty torrents. To such a sudden surprise of the wicked of the old world in the night, probably that alludes in Job xxvii. 20, "Terrors take hold on him as waters; a tempest stealeth him away in the night."

So destruction is wont to come on wicked men, who hear many warnings of approaching destruction, and yet will not be influenced by them. For "he that is often reproved, and hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy," Prov. xxix. 1. And "when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape," 1 Thess. v. 3.

5. If you will not hearken to the many warnings which are given you of approaching destruction, you will be guilty of more than *brutish madness*. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib." They know upon whom they are dependent, and whom they must obey, and act accordingly. But you, so long as you neglect your own salvation, act as if you knew not God, your Creator and Proprietor, nor your dependence upon him. The very

beasts, when they see signs of an approaching storm, will betake themselves to their dens for shelter. Yet you, when abundantly warned of the approaching storm of divine vengeance, will not fly to *the hiding-place from the storm, and the covert from the tempest.* The sparrow, the swallow, and other birds, when they are forewarned of approaching winter, will betake themselves to a safer climate. Yet you who have been often forewarned of the piercing blasts of divine wrath, will not, in order to escape them, enter into the New Jerusalem, of most mild and salubrious air, though the gate stands wide open to receive you. The very ants will be diligent in summer to lay up for winter: yet you will do nothing to lay up in store a good foundation against the time to come. Balaam's ass would not run upon a drawn sword, though his master, for the sake of gain, would expose himself to the sword of God's wrath; and so God made the dumb ass, both in words and actions, to rebuke the madness of the prophet, 1 Pet. ii. 16. In like manner, you, although you have been often warned that the sword of God's wrath is drawn against you, and will certainly be thrust through you, if you proceed in your present course, still proceed, regardless of the consequence.

So God made the very beasts and birds of the old world to rebuke the madness of the men of that day: for they, even all sorts of them, fled to the ark, while the door was yet open: which the men of that day refused to do; God hereby thus signifying, that their folly was greater than that of the very brute creatures.—Such folly and madness are you guilty of, who refuse to hearken to the warnings that are given you of the approaching flood of the wrath of God.

You have been once more warned to-day, while the door of the ark yet stands open. You have, as it were, once again heard the knocks of the hammer and axe in the building of the ark, to put you in mind that a flood is approaching. Take heed therefore that you do not still stop your ears, treat these warnings with a regardless heart, and still neglect the great work which you have to do, lest the flood of wrath suddenly come upon you, sweep you away, and there be no remedy.

SERMON XXII.

PRESSING INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

LUKE xvi. 16.—The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.

IN these words two things may be observed: *First*, wherein the work and office of John the Baptist consisted, viz., in preaching the kingdom of God, to prepare the way for its introduction to succeed the law and the prophets. By the law and the prophets, in the text, seems to be intended the ancient dispensation under the Old Testament, which was received from Moses and the prophets. These are said to be *until John;* not that the revelations given by them are out of use since that time, but that the state of the church, founded and regulated under God by them, the dispensation of which they were the ministers, and wherein the church depended mainly on light received from them, fully continued till John. He first began to introduce the New Testament dispensation, or gospel-state of the church; which, with its glorious, spiritual, and eternal privileges and blessings, is often called the kingdom of heaven, or kingdom of God. John the Baptist preached, that the kingdom of God was at hand "Repent," says he, "for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."—"Since that time," says Christ, "the kingdom of God is preached." John the Baptist first began to preach it; and then, after him, Christ and his disciples preached the same. Thus Christ preached: Matt. iv. 17, "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." So the disciples were directed to preach: Matt. x. 7, "And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand." It was not John the Baptist, but Christ, that fully brought in, and actually established, this kingdom of God; but he, as Christ's forerunner to prepare his way before him, did the first thing that was done towards introducing it. The old dispensation was abolished, and the new brought in by degrees; as the night gradually ceases and gives place to the increasing day which succeeds in its room. First the day-star arises; next follows the light of the sun itself, but dimly reflected, in the dawning of the day; but this light increases, and shines more and more, and the stars that served for light during the foregoing night, gradually go out and their light ceases, as being now needless, till at length the sun rises, and enlightens the world by his own direct light, which increases as he ascends higher above the horizon, till the day-star itself gradually disappears; agreeable to what John says of himself: John iii. 30, "He must increase, but I must decrease." John was the forerunner of Christ, and harbinger of the gospel-day; much as the morning-star is the forerunner of the sun. He had the most honorable office of any of the prophets; the other prophets foretold Christ to come, he revealed him as already come, and had the honor to be that servant who should come immediately before him, and actually introduce him, and even to be the instrument concerned in his solemn inauguration, as he was in baptizing him. He was the greatest of the prophets that came before Christ, as the morning-star is the brightest of all the stars, Matt. xi. 11. He came to prepare men's hearts to receive that kingdom of God which Christ was about more fully to reveal and erect: Luke i. 17, "To make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

Secondly, We may observe wherein his success appeared, viz., in that since

he began his ministry, every man pressed into that kingdom of God which he preached. The greatness of his success appeared in two things:

1. In the generalness of it, with regard to the subject, or the persons in whom the success appeared; *every man.* Here is a term of universality; but it is not to be taken as universal with regard to individuals, but kinds; as such universal terms are often used in Scripture. When John preached, there was an extraordinary pouring out of the Spirit of God that attended his preaching. An uncommon awakening and concern for salvation, appeared on the minds of all sorts of persons; and even in the most unlikely persons, and those from whom such a thing might least be expected; as the Pharisees, who were exceeding proud and self-sufficient, and conceited of their own wisdom and righteousness, and looked on themselves fit to be teachers of others, and used to scorn to be taught; and the Sadducees, who were a kind of infidels, that denied any resurrection, angel, or spirit, or any future state. So that John himself seems to be surprised to see them come to him, under such concern for their salvation, as in Matt. iii. 7: "But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" And besides these, the publicans, who were some of the most infamous sort of men, came to him, inquiring what they should do to be saved. And the soldiers, who were doubtless a very profane, loose, and profligate sort of persons, made the same inquiry, Luke iii. 12, and 14: "Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do?"

2. His success appeared in the manner in which his hearers sought the kingdom of God; they pressed into it. It is elsewhere set forth by their being violent for the kingdom of heaven, and taking it by force. Matt. xi. 12, "From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."

The DOCTRINE that I observe from the words is this.—It concerns every one that would obtain the kingdom of God, to be pressing into it.—In discoursing on this subject, I would,

First, Show *what* is that way of seeking salvation that seems to be pointed forth in the expression of *pressing into the kingdom of God.*

Secondly, Give the reasons *why* it concerns every one that would obtain the kingdom of God, to seek it in this way.—And then make application.

I. I would show what manner of seeking salvation seems to be denoted by "pressing into the kingdom of God."

1. This expression denotes *strength of desire.* Men in general who live under the light of the gospel, and are not atheists, desire the kingdom of God; that is, they desire to go to heaven rather than to hell. Most of them indeed are not much concerned about it; but on the contrary, live a secure and careless life. And some who are many degrees above these, being under some degrees of the awakenings of God's Spirit, yet are not pressing into the kingdom of God. But they that may be said to be truly so, have strong desires to get out of a natural condition, and to get an interest in Christ. They have such a conviction of the misery of their present state, and of the extreme necessity of obtaining a better, that their minds are as it were possessed with and wrapped up in concern about it. To obtain salvation is desired by them above all things in the world. This concern is so great that it very much shuts out other concerns. They used before to have the stream of their desires after other things,

or, it may be, had their concern divided between this and them; but when they come to answer the expression in the text, of *pressing into the kingdom of God*, this concern prevails above all others; it lays other things low, and does in a manner engross the care of the mind. This seeking eternal life should not only be one concern that our souls are taken up about with other things; but salvation should be sought as the one thing needful, Luke x. 42. And as the one thing that is desired, Psalm xxvii. 4.

2. Pressing into the kingdom of heaven denotes earnestness and *firmness of resolution*. There should be strength of resolution, accompanying strength of desire, as it was in the psalmist, in the place just now referred to; "one thing have I desired, and that will I seek after." In order to a thorough engagedness of the mind in this affair, both these must meet together. Besides desires after salvation, there should be an earnest resolution in persons to pursue this good as much as lies in their power; to do all that in the use of their utmost strength they are able to do, in an attendance on every duty, and resisting and militating against all manner of sin, and to continue in such a pursuit.

There are two things needful in a person, in order to these strong resolutions; there must be a sense of the great importance and necessity of the mercy sought, and there must also be a sense of opportunity to obtain it, or the encouragement there is to seek it. The strength of resolution depends on the sense which God gives to the heart of these things. Persons without such a sense, may seem to themselves to take up resolutions; they may, as it were, force a promise to themselves, and say within themselves, "I will seek as long as I live, I will not give up till I obtain," when they do but deceive themselves. Their hearts are not in it; neither do they indeed take up any such resolution as they seem to themselves to do. It is the resolution of the mouth more than of the heart; their hearts are not strongly bent to fulfil what their mouth says. The firmness of resolution lies in the fulness of the disposition of the heart to do what is resolved to be done. Those who are pressing into the kingdom of God, have a disposition of heart to do every thing that is required, and that lies in their power to do, and to continue in it. They have not only earnestness, but steadiness of resolution: they do not seek with a wavering unsteady heart, by turns or fits, being off and on; but it is the constant bent of the soul, if possible, to obtain the kingdom of God.

3. By pressing into the kingdom of God is signified *greatness of endeavor*. It is expressed in Eccles. ix. 10 by doing what our hands find to do *with our might*. And this is the natural and necessary consequence of the two forementioned things. Where there is strength of desire, and firmness of resolution, there will be answerable endeavors. Persons thus engaged in their hearts will "strive to enter in at the strait gate," and will be violent for heaven; their practice will be agreeable to the counsel of the wise man, in Prov. ii. at the beginning, "My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." Here the earnestness of desire and strength of resolution is signified by inclining the ear to wisdom, and applying the heart to understanding; and the greatness of endeavor is denoted by crying after knowledge, and lifting up the voice for understanding; seeking her as silver, and searching for her as for hid treasures: such desires and resolutions, and such endeavors, go together.

4. Pressing into the kingdom of God denotes an engagedness and earnest-

ness, that is *directly about that business* of getting into the kingdom of God. Persons may be in very great exercise and distress of mind, and that about the condition of their souls; their thoughts and cares may be greatly engaged and taken up about things of a spiritual nature, and yet not be pressing into the kingdom of God, nor towards it. The exercise of their minds is not directly about the work of *seeking* salvation, in a diligent attendance on the means that God hath appointed in order to it, but something else that is beside their business; it may be about God's decrees and secret purposes, prying into them, searching for signs whereby they may determine, or at least conjecture, what they are before God makes them known by their accomplishment. They distress their minds with fears that they be not elected, or that they have committed the unpardonable sin, or that their day is past, and that God has given them up to judicial and final hardness, and never intends to show them mercy; and therefore, that it is in vain for them to seek salvation. Or they entangle themselves about the doctrine of original sin, and other mysterious doctrines of religion that are above their comprehension. Many persons that seem to be in great distress about a future eternal state, get much into a way of perplexing themselves with such things as these. When it is so, let them be never so much concerned and engaged in their minds, they cannot be said to be pressing towards the king of God; because their exercise is not in their *work*, but rather that which tends to *hinder* them in their work. If they are violent, they are only working violently to *entangle* themselves, and lay blocks in their own way; their pressure is not forwards. Instead of getting along, they do but lose their time, and worse than merely lose it; instead of fighting with the giants that stand in the way to keep them out of Canaan, they spend away their time and strength in conflicting with shadows that appear by the way-side.

Hence we are not to judge of the hopefulness of the way that persons are in, or of the probability of their success in seeking salvation, only by the greatness of the concern and distress that they are in; for many persons have needless distresses that they had much better be without. It is thus very often with persons overrun with the distemper of melancholy; whence the adversary of souls is wont to take great advantage. But then are persons in the most likely way to obtain the kingdom of heaven, when the intent of their minds, and the engagedness of their spirits, is about their *proper work* and business, and all the bent of their souls is to attend on God's means, and to do what he commands and directs them to. The apostle tells us, 1 Cor. ix. 26, "that he did not fight as those that beat the air." Our time is short enough; we had not need to spend it in that which is nothing to the purpose. There are real difficulties and enemies enough for persons to encounter, to employ all their strength; they had not need to waste it in fighting with phantoms.

5. By pressing into the kingdom of God is denoted a *breaking through opposition and difficulties*. There is in the expression a plain intimation of difficulty. If there were no opposition, but the way was all clear and open, there would be no need of pressing to get along. They therefore that are pressing nto the kingdom of God, go on with such engagedness, that they break through the difficulties that are in their way. They are so set for salvation, that those things by which others are discouraged, and stopped, and turned back, do not stop them, but they press through them. Persons ought to be so resolved for heaven, that if by any means they *can* obtain, they *will* obtain. Whether those means be difficult or easy, cross or agreeable, if they are requisite means of salvation, they should be complied with. When any thing is presented to be done, the question should not be, Is it easy or hard? Is it agreeable to my carnal in

clinations or interest, or against them? But is it a required means of my obtaining an interest in Jesus Christ, and eternal salvation? Thus the apostle, Philip. iii 11, "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." He tells us there in the context what difficulties he broke through, that he suffered the loss of all things, and was willingly made conformable even to Christ's death, though that was attended with such extreme torment and ignominy.

He that is pressing into the kingdom of God, commonly finds many things in the way that are against the grain; but he is not stopped by the cross that lies before him, but takes it up, and carries it. Suppose there be something incumbent on him to do, that is cross to his natural temper, and irksome to him on that account; suppose something that he cannot do without suffering in his estate, or that he apprehends will look odd and strange in the eyes of others, and expose him to ridicule and reproach, or any thing that will offend a neighbor, and get his ill-will, or something that will be very cross to his own carnal appetite—he will *press through such difficulties*. Every thing that is found to be a weight that hinders him in running this race he casts from him, though it be a weight of pearls; yea, if it be a right hand or a foot that offends him, he will cut them off, and will not stick at plucking out a right eye with his own hands. These things are insuperable difficulties to those who are not thoroughly engaged in seeking their salvation; they are stumbling-blocks that they never get over. But it is not so with him that presses into the kingdom of God. Those things (before he was thoroughly roused from his security) about which he was wont to have long parleyings and disputings with his own conscience—employing carnal reason to invent arguments and pleas of excuse—he now sticks at no longer; he has done with this endless disputing and reasoning, and presses violently through all difficulties. Let what will be in the way, heaven is what he must and will obtain, not if he can without difficulty, but if it be possible. He meets with temptation: the devil is often whispering in his ear, setting allurements before him, magnifying the difficulties of the work he is engaged in, telling him that they are insuperable, and that he can never conquer them, and trying all ways in the world to discourage him; but still he presses forward. God has given and maintains such an earnest spirit for heaven, that the devil cannot stop him in his course; he is not at leisure to lend an ear to what he has to say.—I come now,

II. To show *why* the kingdom of heaven should be sought in this manner. It should be thus sought,

1. On account of the *extreme necessity* we are in of getting into the kingdom of heaven. We are in a perishing necessity of it; without it we are utterly and eternally lost. Out of the kingdom of God is no safety; there is no other hiding-place; this is the only city of refuge, in which we can be secure from the avenger that pursues all the ungodly. The vengeance of God will pursue, overtake, and eternally destroy, them that are not in this kingdom. All that are without this inclosure will be swallowed up in an overflowing fiery deluge of wrath. They may stand at the door and knock, and cry, Lord, Lord, open to us, in vain; they will be thrust back; and God will have no mercy on them; they shall be eternally left of him. His fearful vengeance will seize them; the devils will lay hold of them; and all evil will come upon them; and there will be none to pity or help; their case will be utterly desperate, and infinitely doleful. It will be a gone case with them; all offers of mercy and expressions of divine goodness will be finally withdrawn, and all hope will be lost. God will have no kind of regard to their well-being; will take no care of them to save them from any enemy, or any evil; but himself will be their dread-

ful enemy, and will execute wrath with fury, and will take vengeance in an inexpressibly dreadful manner. Such as shall be in this case will be lost and undone indeed! They will be sunk down into perdition, infinitely below all that we can think. For who knows the power of God's anger? And who knows the misery of that poor worm, on whom that anger is executed without mercy?

2. On account of the shortness and *uncertainty of the opportunity* for getting into this kingdom. When a few days are past, all our opportunity for it will be gone. Our day is limited. God has set our bounds, and we know not where. While persons are out of this kingdom, they are in danger every hour of being overtaken with wrath. We know not how soon we shall get past that line, beyond which there is no work, device, knowledge, nor wisdom; and therefore we should do what we have to do with our might, Eccles. ix. 10.

3. On account of the *difficulty* of getting into the kingdom of God. There are innumerable difficulties in the way; such as few conquer: most of them that try have not resolution, courage, earnestness, and constancy enough; but they fail, give up, and perish. The difficulties are too many and too great for them that do not violently press forward. They never get along, but stick by the way; are turned aside, or turned back, and ruined. Matt. vii. 14, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Luke xiii. 24, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."

4. The *possibility* of obtaining. Though it be attended with so much difficulty, yet it is not a thing impossible. Acts viii. 22, "If perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee." 2 Tim. ii. 25, "If peradventure God will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." However sinful a person is, and whatever his circumstances are, there is, notwithstanding, a possibility of his salvation. He himself is capable of it, and God is able to accomplish it, and has mercy sufficient for it; and there is sufficient provision made through Christ, that God may do it consistent with the honor of his majesty, justice, and truth. So that there is no want either of sufficiency in God, or capacity in the sinner, in order to this. The greatest and vilest, most blind, dead, hard-hearted sinner living, is a subject capable of saving light and grace. Seeing therefore there is such necessity of obtaining the kingdom of God, and so short a time, and such difficulty, and yet such a possibility, it may well induce us to press into it. Jonah iii. 8, 9.

5. It is meet that the kingdom of heaven should be thus sought, because of the *great excellency* of it. We are willing to seek earthly things, of trifling value, with great diligence, and through much difficulty; it therefore certainly becomes us to seek that with great earnestness which is of infinitely greater worth and excellence. And how well may God expect and require it of us, that we should seek it in such a manner, in order to our obtaining it!

6. Such a manner of seeking is *needful to prepare* persons for the kingdom of God. Such earnestness and thoroughness of endeavors, is the ordinary means that God makes use of to bring persons to an acquaintance with themselves, to a sight of their own hearts, to a sense of their own helplessness, and to a despair in their own strength and righteousness. And such engagedness and constancy in seeking the kingdom of heaven, prepare the soul to receive it the more joyfully and thankfully, and the more highly to prize and value it when obtained. So that it is in mercy to us, as well as for the glory of his own name, that God has appointed such earnest seeking, to be the way in which he will bestow the kingdom of heaven.

APPLICATION.

The use I would make of this doctrine, is of *exhortation* to all Christless persons to press into the kingdom of God. Some of you are inquiring what you shall do. You seem to desire to know what is the way wherein salvation is to be sought, and how you may be likely to obtain it. You have now heard the way that the holy word of God directs to. Some are seeking, but it cannot be said of them that they are *pressing* into the kingdom of heaven. There are many that in time past have sought salvation, but not in this manner, and so they never obtained, but are now gone to hell. Some of them sought it year after year, but failed of it, and perished at last. They were overtaken with divine wrath, and are now suffering the fearful misery of damnation, and have no rest day nor night, having no more opportunity to seek, but must suffer and be miserable throughout the never-ending ages of eternity. Be exhorted, therefore, not to seek salvation as they did, but let the kingdom of heaven suffer violence from you.

Here I would first answer an *objection* or two, and then proceed to give some *directions* how to press into the kingdom of God.

Object. 1. Some may be ready to say, We cannot do this of ourselves; that strength of desire, and firmness of resolution, that have been spoken of, are out of our reach. If I endeavor to resolve and to seek with engagedness of spirit, I find I fail; my thoughts are presently off from the business, and I feel myself dull, and my engagedness relaxed, in spite of all I can do.

Ans. 1. Though earnestness of mind be not immediately in your power, yet the consideration of what has been now said of the *need* of it, may be a means of stirring you up to it. It is true, persons never will be thoroughly engaged in this business, unless it be by God's influence; but God influences persons by means. Persons are not stirred up to a thorough earnestness without some considerations that move them to it. And if persons can but be made sensible of the necessity of salvation, and also duly consider the exceeding difficulty of it, and the greatness of the opposition, and how short and uncertain the time is, but yet are sensible that they have an opportunity, and that there is a possibility of their obtaining, they will need no more in order to their being thoroughly engaged and resolved in this matter. If we see persons slack and unresolved, and unsteady, it is because they do not enough consider these things.

2. Though strong desires and resolutions of mind be not in your power, yet painfulness of endeavors is in your power. It is in your power to take pains in the use of means, yea, very great pains. You can be very painful and diligent in watching your own heart, and striving against sin. Though there is all manner of corruption in the heart continually ready to work, yet you can very laboriously watch and strive against these corruptions; and it is in your power, with great diligence to attend the matter of your duty towards God and towards your neighbor. It is in your power to attend all ordinances, and all public and private duties of religion, and to do it with your might. It would be a contradiction to suppose that a man cannot do these things with all the might he has, though he cannot do them with more might than he has. The dulness and deadness of the heart, and slothfulness of disposition, do not hinder men being able to take pains, though it hinders their being willing. That is one thing wherein your laboriousness may appear, even striving against your own dulness. That men have a dead and sluggish heart, does not argue that they be not able to take pains; it is so far from that, that it gives occasion for pains. It is one of

the difficulties in the way of duty, that persons have to strive with, and that give occasion for struggling and labor. If there were no difficulties attended seeking salvation, there would be no occasion for striving; a man would have nothing to strive about. There is indeed a great deal of difficulty attending all duties required of those that would obtain heaven. It is an exceeding difficult thing for them to keep their thoughts; it is a difficult thing seriously, or to any good purpose, to consider matters of the greatest importance; it is a difficult thing to hear, or read, or pray attentively. But it does not argue that a man cannot strive in these things because they are difficult; nay, he could not strive therein if there were not difficulty in them. For what is there excepting difficulties that any can have to strive or struggle with in any affair or business? Earnestness of mind, and diligence of endeavor, tend to promote each other. He that has a heart earnestly engaged, will take pains; and he that is diligent and painful in all duty, probably will not be so long before he finds the sensibleness of his heart and earnestness of his spirit greatly increased.

Object. 2. Some may object, that if they are earnest, and take a great deal of pains, they shall be in danger of trusting to what they do; they are afraid of doing their duty for fear of making a righteousness of it.

Ans. There is ordinarily no kind of seekers that trust so much to what they do, as slack and dull seekers. Though all seeking salvation, that have never been the subjects of a thorough humiliation, do trust in their own righteousness; yet some do it much more fully than others. Some, though they *trust* in their own righteousness, yet are not *quiet* in it. And those who are most disturbed in their self-confidence, (and therefore in the likeliest way to be wholly brought off from it,) are not such as go on in a remiss way of seeking, but such as are most earnest and thoroughly engaged; partly because in such a way conscience is kept more sensible. A more awakened conscience will not rest so quietly in moral and religious duties, as one that is less awakened. A dull seeker's conscience will be in a great measure satisfied and quieted with his own works and performances; but one that is thoroughly awakened cannot be stilled or pacified with such things as these. In this way persons gain much more knowledge of themselves, and acquaintance with their own hearts, than in a negligent, slight way of seeking; for they have a great deal more experience of themselves. It is experience of ourselves, and finding what we are, that God commonly makes use of as the means of bringing us off from all dependence on ourselves. But men never get acquaintance with themselves so fast, as in the most earnest way of seeking. They that are in this way have more to engage them to think of their sins, and strictly to observe themselves, and have much more to do with their own hearts, than others. Such a one has much more experience of his own weakness, than another that does not put forth and try his strength; and will therefore sooner see himself dead in sin. Such a one, though he hath a disposition continually to be flying to his own righteousness, yet finds rest in nothing; he wanders about from one thing to another, seeking something to ease his disquieted conscience; he is driven from one refuge to another, goes from mountain to hill, seeking rest and finding none; and therefore will the sooner prove that there is no rest to be found, nor trust to be put, in any creature whatsoever.

It is therefore quite a wrong notion that some entertain, that the more they do, the more they shall depend on it. Whereas the reverse is true; the more they do, or the more thorough they are in seeking, the less will they be likely to rest in their doings, and the sooner will they see the vanity of all that they do. So that person will exceedingly miss it, if ever they neglect to do any

duty either to God or man, whether it be any duty of religion, justice, or charity, under a notion of its exposing them to trust in their own righteousness. It is very true, that it is a common thing for persons, when they earnestly seek salvation, to trust in the pains that they take: but yet commonly those that go on in a more slight way, trust a great deal more securely to their dull services, than he that is pressing into the kingdom of God does to his earnestness. Men's slackness in religion, and their trust in their own righteousness, strengthen and establish one another. Their trust in what they have done, and what they now do, settles them in a slothful rest and ease, and hinders their being sensible of their need of rousing up themselves and pressing forward. And on the other hand, their negligence tends to benumb them, and keep them in such ignorance of themselves, that the most miserable refuges are stupidly rested in as sufficient. Therefore we see, that when persons have been going on for a long time in such a way, and God afterwards comes more thoroughly to awaken them, and to stir them up to be in good earnest, he shakes all their old foundations, and rouses them out of their old resting-places; so that they cannot quiet themselves with those things that formerly kept them secure.

I would now proceed to give some *directions* how you should press into the kingdom of God.

1. Be directed to sacrifice *every thing* to your soul's eternal interest. Let seeking this be so much your bent, and what you are so resolved in, that you will make every thing give place to it. Let nothing stand before your resolution of seeking the kingdom of God. Whatever it be that you used to look upon as a convenience, or comfort, or ease, or thing desirable on any account, if it stands in the way of this great concern, let it be dismissed without hesitation; and if it be of that nature that it is likely always to be a hinderance, then wholly have done with it, and never entertain any expectation from it more. If in time past you have, for the sake of worldly gain, involved yourself in more care and business than you find to be consistent with your being so thorough in the business of religion as you ought to be, then get into some other way, though you suffer in your worldly interest by it. Or if you have heretofore been conversant with company that you have reason to think have been and will be a snare to you, and a hinderance to this great design in any wise, break off from their society, however it may expose you to reproach from your old companions, or let what will be the effect of it. Whatever it be that stands in the way of your most advantageously seeking salvation—whether it be some dear sinful pleasure, or strong carnal appetite, or credit and honor, or the good-will of some persons whose friendship you desire, and whose esteem and liking you have highly valued—and though there be danger, if you do as you ought, that you shall be looked upon by them as odd and ridiculous, and become contemptible in their eyes—or if it be your ease and indolence, and aversion to continual labor; or your outward convenience, in any respect, whereby you might avoid difficulties of one kind or other—*let all go;* offer up all such things together, as it were, in one sacrifice, to the interest of your soul. Let nothing stand in competition with this, but make every thing to fall before it. If the flesh must be crossed, then cross it, spare it not, crucify it, and do not be afraid of being too cruel to it. Gal. v. 24, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts." Have no dependence on any worldly enjoyment whatsoever. Let salvation be the one thing with you. This is what is certainly required of you; and this is what many stick at; this giving up other things for salvation, is a stumbling-block that few get over. While others pressed into the kingdom of God at the preaching of John the Baptist, Herod

was pretty much stirred by his preaching. It is said, he heard him, and observed him, and did many things; but when he came to tell him that he must part with his beloved Herodias, here he stuck; this he never would yield to, Mark vii. 18—20. The rich young man was considerably concerned for salvation and accordingly was a very strict liver in many things: but when Christ came to direct him to go and sell all that he had, and give to the poor, and come and follow him, he could not find in his heart to comply with it, but went away sorrowful. He had great possessions, and set his heart much on his estate, and could not bear to part with it. It may be, if Christ had directed him only to give away a considerable part of his estate, he would have done it; yea, perhaps, if he had bid him part with half of it, he would have complied with it; when he directed him to throw up all, he could not grapple with such a proposal. Herein the straitness of the gate very much consists; and it is on this account that so many seek to enter in, and are not able. There are many that have a great mind to salvation, and spend great part of their time in wishing that they had it, but they will not comply with the necessary means.

2. Be directed to *forget the things that are behind;* that is, not to keep thinking and making much of what you have done, but let your mind be wholly intent on what you have to do. In some sense you ought to look back; you should look back on your sins. Jer. ii. 23, "See thy way in the valley, know what thou hast done." You should look back on the wretchedness of your religious performances, and consider how you have fallen short in them; how exceedingly polluted all your duties have been, and how justly God might reject and loathe them, and you for them. But you ought not to spend your time in looking back, as many persons do, thinking how much they have done for their salvation; what great pains they have taken, how that they have done what they can, and do not see how they can do more; how long a time they have been seeking, and how much more they have done than others, and even than such and such who have obtained mercy. They think with themselves how hardly God deals with them, that he does not extend mercy to them, but turns a deaf ear to their cries; and hence discourage themselves, and complain of God. Do not thus spend your time in looking on what is past, but look forward, and consider what is before you; consider what it is that you can do, and what it is necessary that you should do, and what God calls you still to do, in order to your own salvation. The apostle, in the 3d chapter to the Philippians, tells us what things he did while a Jew, how much he had to boast of, if any could boast; but he tells us, that he forgot those things, and all others that were behind, and reached forth towards the things that were before, pressing forwards towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

3. Labor to get your *heart thoroughly disposed* to go on and hold out to the end. Many that seem to be earnest have not a heart thus disposed. It is a common thing for persons to appear greatly affected for a little while; but all is soon passed away, and there is no more to be seen of it. Labor therefore to obtain a thorough willingness and preparation of spirit, to continue seeking, in the use of your utmost endeavors, without limitation; and do not think your whole life too long. And in order to this, be advised to two things.

(1.) Remember that if ever God bestows mercy upon you, he will use his sovereign pleasure about the *time when.* He will bestow it on some in a little time, and on others not till they have sought it long. If other persons are soon enlightened and comforted, while you remain long in darkness, there is no other way but for you to wait. God will act arbitrarily in this matter, and you cannot help it. You must even be content to wait, in a way of laborious and earnest

striving, till his time comes. If you refuse, you will but undo yourself; and when you shall hereafter find yourself undone, and see that your case is past remedy, how will you condemn yourself for foregoing a great probability of salvation, only because you had not patience to hold out, and was not willing to be at the trouble of a persevering labor! And what will it avail before God or your own conscience to say, that you could not bear to be obliged to seek salvation so long, when God bestowed it on others that sought it but for a very short time? Though God may have bestowed the testimonies of his favor on others in a few days or hours after they have begun earnestly to seek it, how does that alter the case as to you, if there proves to be a necessity of your laboriously seeking many years before you obtain them? Is salvation less worth taking a great deal of pains for, because, through the sovereign pleasure of God, others have obtained it with comparatively little pains? If there are two persons, the one of which has obtained converting grace with comparative ease, and another that has obtained it after continuing for many years in the greatest and most earnest labors after it, how little difference does it make at last, when once salvation is obtained! Put all the *labor* and pains, the long-continued difficulties and strugglings of the one in the scale against salvation, and how little does it subtract; and put the ease with which the other has obtained in the scale with salvation, and how little does it add! What is either added or subtracted is lighter than vanity, and a thing worthy of no consideration, when compared with that infinite benefit that is obtained. Indeed, if you were ten thousand years, and all that time should strive and press forward with as great earnestness as ever a person did for one day, all this would bear no proportion to the importance of the benefit; and it will doubtless appear little to you, when once you come to be in actual possession of eternal glory, and to see what that eternal misery is which you have escaped. You must not think much of your pains, and of the length of time; you must press towards the kingdom of God, and do your utmost, and hold out to the end, and learn to make no account of it when you have done. You must undertake the business of seeking salvation upon these terms, and with no other expectations than this, that if ever God bestows mercy it will be in his own time; and not only so, but also that when you have done all, God will not hold himself obliged to show you mercy at last.

(2.) Endeavor now thoroughly to weigh in your mind the difficulty, and to *count the cost* of perseverance in seeking salvation. You that are now setting out in this business, (as there are many here who have very lately set about it;—praised be the name of God that he has stirred you up to it!) be exhorted to attend this direction. Do not undertake in this affair with any other thought but of giving yourself wholly to it for the remaining part of your life, and going through many and great difficulties in it. Take heed that you do not engage secretly upon this condition, that you shall obtain in a little time, promising yourself that it shall be within this present season of the pouring out of God's Spirit, or with any other limitation of time whatsoever. Many, when they begin, (seeming to set out very earnestly,) do not expect that they shall need to seek very long, and so do not prepare themselves for it. And therefore, when they come to find it otherwise, and meet with unexpected difficulty they are found unguarded, and easily overthrown. But let me advise you all who are now seeking salvation, not to entertain any self-flattering thoughts; but weigh the utmost difficulties of perseverance, and be provided for them, having your mind fixed in it to go through them, let them be what they will. Consider now beforehand, how tedious it would be, with utmost earnestness and la-

bor, to strive after salvation for many years, in the mean time receiving no joyful or comfortable evidence of your having obtained. Consider what a great temptation to discouragement there probably would be in it: how apt you would be to yield the case; how ready to think that it is in vain for you to seek any longer, and that God never intends to show you mercy, in that he has not yet done it; how apt you would be to think with yourself, "What an uncomfortable life do I live! How much more unpleasantly do I spend my time than others that do not perplex their minds about the things of another world, but are at ease, and take the comfort of their worldly enjoyments!" Consider what a temptation there would probably be in it, if you saw others brought in that began to seek the kingdom of heaven long after you, rejoicing in a hope and sense of Gods' favor, after but little pains and a short time of awakening; while you, from day to day, and from year to year, seemed to labor in vain. Prepare for such temptations now. Lay in beforehand for such trials and difficulties, that you may not think any strange thing has happened when they come.

I hope that those who have given attention to what has been said, have by this time conceived, in some measure, what is signified by the expression in the text, and after what manner they ought to press into the kingdom of God. Here is this to induce you to a compliance with what you have been directed to; if you sit still, you die; if you go backward, behold you shall surely die; if you go forward, you may live. And though God has not bound himself to any thing that a person does while destitute of faith, and out of Christ, yet there is great probability, that in a way of hearkening to this counsel you will live; and that by pressing onward, and persevering, you will at last, as it were by violence, take the kingdom of heaven. Those of you who have not only heard the directions given, but shall, through God's merciful assistance, practise according to them, are those that probably will overcome. These we may well hope at last to see standing with the Lamb on mount Sion, clothed in white robes, with palms in their hands; when all your labor and toil will be abundantly compensated, and you will not repent that you have taken so much pains, and denied yourself so much, and waited so long. This self-denial, this waiting, will then look little, and vanish into nothing in your eyes, being all swallowed up in the first minute's enjoyment of that glory that you will then possess, and will uninterruptedly possess and enjoy to all eternity.

4th Direction. Improve the present season of the pouring out of the Spirit of God on this town. Prudence in any affair whatsoever consists very much in minding and improving our opportunities. If you would have spiritual prosperity, you must exercise prudence in the concerns of your souls, as well as in outward concerns when you seek outward prosperity. The prudent husbandman will observe his opportunities; he will improve seed-time and harvest; he will make his advantage of the showers and shines of heaven. The prudent merchant will discern his opportunities; he will not be idle on a market-day; he is careful not to let slip his seasons for enriching himself: so will those who prudently seek the fruits of righteousness, and the merchandise of wisdom, improve their opportunities for their eternal wealth and happiness.

God is pleased at this time, in a very remarkable manner, to pour out his Spirit amongst us; (glory be to his name!) You that have a mind to obtain converting grace and to go to heaven when you die, now is your season! Now, if you have any sort of prudence for your own salvation, and have not a mind to go to hell, improve this season! Now is the accepted time! Now is the day of salvation! You that in time past have been called upon, and have turned a deaf ear to God's voice, and long stood out and resisted his commands and

counsels, hear God's voice to-day, while it is called to-day! Do not harden your hearts at such a day as this! Now you have a special and remarkable price put into your hands to get wisdom, if you have but a heart to improve it.

God hath his certain days or appointed seasons of exercising both mercy and judgment. There are some remarkable times of wrath, laid out by God for his awful visitation, and the executions of his anger; which times are called days of vengeance, Prov. vi. 34. Wherein God will visit for sin, Exod. xxxii. 34. And so, on the contrary, God has laid out in his sovereign counsels seasons of remarkable mercy, wherein he will manifest himself in the exercise of his grace and loving-kindness, more than at other times. Such times in Scripture are called by way of eminency accepted times, and days of salvation, and also days of God's visitation; because they are days wherein God will visit in a way of mercy, as Luke xix. 44: "And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." It is such a time now in this town; it is with us a day of God's gracious visitation. It is indeed a day of grace with us as long as we live in this world, in the enjoyment of the means of grace; but such a time as this is especially, and in a distinguishing manner, a day of grace. There is a door of mercy always standing open for sinners; but at such a day as this, God opens an extraordinary door.

We are directed to seek the Lord while he may be found, and to call upon him while he is near, Isa. lv. 6. If you that are hitherto Christless, be not strangely besotted and infatuated, you will by all means improve such an opportunity as this to get to heaven, when heaven is brought so near, when the fountain is opened in the midst of us in so extraordinary a manner. Now is the time to obtain a supply of the necessities of your poor perishing souls! This is the day for sinners that have a mind to be converted before they die, when God is dealing forth so liberally and bountifully amongst us; when conversion and salvation work is going on amongst us from Sabbath to Sabbath, and many are pressing into the kingdom of God! Now do not stay behind, but press in amongst the rest! Others have been stirred up to be in good earnest, and have taken heaven by violence; be entreated to follow their example, if you would have a part of the inheritance with them, and would not be left at the great day, when they are taken!

How should it move you to consider that you have this opportunity now in your hands! You are in the actual possession of it! If it were past it would not be in your power to recover it, or in the power of any creature to bring it back for you; but it is not past; it is now, at this day. Now is the accepted time, even while it is called to-day! Will you sit still at such a time? Will you sleep in such a harvest? Will you deal with a slack hand, and stay behind out of mere sloth, or love to some lust, or lothness to grapple with some small difficulty, or to put yourself a little out of your way, when so many are flowing to the goodness of the Lord? You are behind still; and so you will be in danger of being left behind, when the whole number is completed that are to enter in, if you do not earnestly bestir yourself! To be left behind at the close of such a season as this, will be awful—next to being left behind on that day when God's saints shall mount up as with wings to meet the Lord in the air—and will be what will appear very threatening of it.

God is now calling you in an extraordinary manner: and it is agreeable to the will and word of Christ, that I should now, in his name, call you, as one set over you, and send to you to that end; so it is his will that you should hearken

to what I say, as his voice. I therefore beseech you in Christ's stead now to press into the kingdom of God! Whoever you are, whether young or old, small or great; if you are a great sinner, if you have been a backslider, if you have quenched the Spirit, be who you will, do not stand making objections, but arise, apply yourselves to your work! Do what you have to do with your might. Christ is calling you before, and holding forth his grace, and everlasting benefits, and wrath is pursuing you behind: wherefore fly for your life, and look not behind you!

But here I would particularly direct myself to several sorts of persons.

I. To those sinners who are in a measure awakened, and are concerned for their salvation. You have reason to be glad that you have such an opportunity, and to prize it above gold. To induce you to prize and improve it, consider several things.

1. God has doubtless a design now to deal forth saving blessings to a number. God has done it to some already, and it is not probable that he has yet finished his work amongst us: we may well hope still to see others brought out of darkness into marvellous light. And therefore,

2. God comes this day, and knocks at many persons' doors, and at your door among the rest. God seems to be come in a very unusual manner amongst us, upon a gracious and merciful design; a design of saving a number of poor miserable souls out of a lost and perishing condition, and of bringing them into a happy state and eternal glory! This is offered to you, not only as it has always been in the word and ordinances, but by the particular influences of the Spirit of Christ awakening you! This special offer is made to many amongst us; and you are not passed over. Christ has not forgot you; but has come to your door; and there as it were stands waiting for you to open to him. If you have wisdom and discretion to discern your own advantage, you will know that now is your opportunity.

3. How much more easily converting grace is obtained at such a time, than at other times! The work is equally easy with God at all times; but there is far less difficulty in the way as to *men* at such a time, than at other times. It is, as I said before, a day of God's gracious visitation; a day that he has as it were set apart for the more liberally and bountifully dispensing of his grace; a day wherein God's hand is opened wide. Experience shows it. God seems to be more ready to help, to give proper convictions, to help against temptations, and let in divine light. He seems to carry on his work with a more glorious discovery of his power, and Satan is more chained up than at other times. Those difficulties and temptations that persons before stuck at, from year to year, they are soon helped over. The work of God is carried on with greater speed and swiftness, and there are often instances of sudden conversion at such a time. So it was in the apostles' days, when there was a time of most extraordinary pouring out of the Spirit that ever was. How quick and sudden were conversions in those days! Such instances as that of the jailer abounded then, in fulfilment of that prophecy, Isa. lxvi. 7, 8, "Before she travailed, she brought forth: before her pain came, she was delivered of a man-child. Who hath heard such a thing? Who hath seen such things? For as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children." So it is in some degree, whenever there is an extraordinary pouring out of the Spirit of God; more or less so, in proportion to the greatness of that effusion. There is seldom such quick work made of it at other times. Persons are not so soon delivered from their various temptations and entanglements; but are much longer wandering in a wilderness, and groping in darkness. And yet,

4. There are probably some here present that are now concerned about their salvation, that never will obtain. It is not to be supposed that all that are now moved and awakened, will ever be savingly converted. Doubtless there are many now seeking that will not be able to enter. When has it been so in times past, when there has been times of great outpourings of God's Spirit, but that many who for a while have inquired with others, what they should do to be saved, have failed, and afterwards grown hard and secure? All of you that are now awakened, have a mind to obtain salvation, and probably hope to get a title to heaven, in the time of this present moving of God's Spirit: but yet, (though it be awful to be spoken, and awful to be thought,) we have no reason to think any other, than that some of you will burn in hell to all eternity. You all are afraid of hell, and seem at present disposed to take pains to be delivered from it; and yet it would be unreasonable to think any other, than that some of you will have your portion in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. Though there are so many that seem to obtain so easily, having been but a little while under convictions, yet, for all that, some never will obtain. Some will soon lose the sense of things they now have; though their awakenings seem to be very considerable for the present, they will not hold; they have not hearts disposed to hold on through very many difficulties. Some that have set out for heaven, and hope as much as others to obtain, are indeed but slighty and slack, even now, in the midst of such a time as this. And others, who for the present seem to be more in earnest, will probably, before long decline and fail, and gradually return to be as they were before. The convictions of some seem to be great, while that which is the occasion of their convictions is new; which, when that begins to grow old, will gradually decay and wear off. Thus, it may be, the occasion of your awakening has been the hearing of the conversion of some person, or seeing so extraordinary a dispensation of Providence as this in which God now appears amongst us; but by and by the newness and freshness of these things will be gone, and so will not affect your mind as now they do; and it may be your convictions will go away with it.

Though this be a time wherein God doth more liberally bestow his grace, and so a time of greater advantage for obtaining it; yet there seems to be, upon some accounts, greater danger of backsliding, than when persons are awakened at other times. For commonly such extraordinary times do not last long; and then when they cease, there are multitudes that lose their convictions as it were together.

We speak of it as a happy thing, that God is pleased to cause such a time amongst us, and so it is indeed: but there are some to whom it will be no benefit; it will be an occasion of their greater misery; they will wish they had never seen this time; it will be more tolerable for those that never saw it, or any thing like it, in the day of judgment, than for them. It is an awful consideration, that there are probably those here, whom the great Judge will hereafter call to a strict account about this very thing, why they no better improved this opportunity, when he set open the fountain of his grace, and so loudly called upon them, and came and strove with them in particular, by the awakening influences of his Spirit; and they will have no good account to give to the Judge, but their mouths will be stopped, and they will stand speechless before him.

You had need therefore to be earnest, and very resolved in this affair, that you may not be one of those who shall thus fail, that you may so fight, as not uncertainly, and so run, as that you may win the prize.

5. Consider in what sad circumstances times of extraordinary effusion of

God's Spirit commonly leave persons, when they leave them unconverted. They *find* them in a doleful, because in a natural condition; but commonly *leave* them in a much more doleful condition. They are left dreadfully hardened, and with a great increase of guilt, and their souls under a more strong dominion and possession of Satan. And frequently seasons of extraordinary advantage for salvation, when they pass over persons, and they do not improve them, nor receive any good in them, seal their damnation. As such seasons leave them, God forever leaves them, and gives them up to judicial hardness. Luke xix. 41, 42, "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."

6. Consider, that it is very uncertain whether you will ever see such another time as this. If there should be such another time, it is very uncertain whether you will live to see it. Many that are now concerned for their salvation amongst us, will probably be in their graves, and it may be in hell, before that time; and if you should miss this opportunity, it may be so with you. And what good will that do you, to have the Spirit of God poured out upon earth, in the place where you once lived, while you are tormented in hell? What will it avail you, that others are crying, What shall I do to be saved? while you are shut up forever in the bottomless pit, and are wailing and gnashing your teeth in everlasting burnings?

Wherefore improve this opportunity, while God is pouring out his Spirit, and you are on earth, and while you dwell in that place where the Spirit of God is thus poured out, and you yourself have the awakening influences of it, that you may never wail and gnash your teeth in hell, but may sing in heaven forever, with others that are redeemed from amongst men, and redeemed amongst us.

7. If you should see another such time, it will be under far greater disadvantages than now. You will probably then be much older, and will have more hardened your heart; and so will be under less probability of receiving good. Some persons are so hardened in sin, and so left of God, that they can live through such a time as this, and not be much awakened or affected by it; they can stand their ground, and be but little moved. And so it may be with you, by another such time, if there should be another amongst us, and you should live to see it. The case in all probability will be greatly altered with you by that time. If you should continue Christless and graceless till then, you will be much further from the kingdom of God, and much deeper involved in snares and misery; and the devil will probably have a vastly greater advantage against you, to tempt and confound you.

8. We do not know but that God is now gathering in his elect, before some great and sore judgment. It has been God's manner before he casts off a visible people, or brings some great and destroying judgments upon them, first to gather in his elect, that they may be secure. So it was before the casting off the Jews from being God's people. There was first a very remarkable pouring out of the Spirit, and gathering in of the elect, by the preaching of the apostles and evangelists, as we read in the beginning of the Acts: but after this harvest and its gleanings were over the rest were blinded, and hardened; the gospel had little success amongst them, and the nation was given up, and cast off from being God's people, and their city and land was destroyed by the Romans in a terrible manner; and they have been cast off by God now for a great many ages, and still remain a hardened and rejected people. So we read in the beginning of the 7th chapter of the Revelations, that God, when about to

bring destroying judgments on the earth, first sealed his servants in the forehead. He set his seal upon the hearts of the elect, gave them the saving influences and indwelling of his Spirit, by which they were sealed to the day of redemption. Rev. vii. 1—3, "And after these things, I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads."

And this may be the case now, that God is about, in a great measure, to forsake this land, and give up this people, and to bring most awful and overwhelming judgments upon it, and that he is now gathering in his elect, to secure them from the calamity. The state of the nation, and of this land, never looked so threatening of such a thing as at this day. The present aspect of things exceedingly threatens vital religion, and even those truths that are especially the foundation of it, out of this land. If it should be so, how awful will the case be with those that shall be left, and not brought in, while God continues the influences of his Spirit, to gather in those that are to be redeemed from amongst us!

9. If you neglect the present opportunity, and be finally unbelieving, those that are converted in this time of the pouring out of God's Spirit will rise up in judgment against you. Your neighbors, your relations, acquaintance, or companions that are converted, will that day appear against you. They will not only be taken while you are left, mounting up with joy to meet the Lord in the air—at his right hand with glorious saints and angels, while you are at the left with devils—but how will they rise up in judgment *against* you! However friendly you have been together, and have taken pleasure in one another's company, and have often familiarly conversed together, they will then surely appear against you. They will rise up as witnesses, and will declare what a precious opportunity you had, and did not improve; how you continued unbelieving, and rejected the offers of a Saviour, when those offers were made in so extraordinary a manner, and when so many others were prevailed upon to accept of Christ; how you was negligent and slack, and did not know the things that belonged to your peace, in that your day. And not only so, but they shall be your judges, as assessors with the great Judge; and as such will appear against you; they will be with the Judge in passing sentence upon you. 1 Cor. vi. 2, "Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?" Christ will admit them to the honor of judging the world with him: "They shall sit with him in his throne," Rev. iii. 21. They shall sit with Christ in his throne of government, and they will sit with him in his throne of judgment, and shall be judges with him when you are judged, and as such shall condemn you.

10. And *lastly*, You do not know that you shall live through the present time out of the pouring out of God's Spirit. You may be taken away in the midst of it, or you may be taken away in the beginning of it; as God in his providence is putting you in mind, by the late instance of death in a young person in the town. God has of late been very awful in his dealings with us, in the repeated deaths of young persons amongst us. This should stir every one up to be in the more haste to press into the kingdom of God, that so you may be safe whenever death comes. This is a blessed season and opportunity; but you do not know how little of it you may have. You may have much less of it than others; may by death be suddenly snatched away from all advan-

tages that are here enjoyed for the good of souls. Therefore make haste, and escape for thy life. One moment's delay is dangerous; for wrath is pursuing, and divine vengeance hanging over every uncovered person.

Let these considerations move every one to be improving this opportunity, that while others receive saving good, and are made heirs of eternal glory, you may not be left behind, in the same miserable doleful circumstances in which you came into the world, a poor captive to sin and Satan, a lost sheep, a perishing, undone creature, sinking down into everlasting perdition; that you may not be one of them spoken of, Jer. xvii. 6, "That shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good comes." If you do not improve this opportunity, remember I have told you, you will hereafter lament it; and if you do not lament it in this world, then I will leave it with you to remember it throughout a miserable eternity.

II. I would address myself to such as yet remain unawakened. It is an awful thing that there should be any one person remaining secure amongst us at such a time as this; but yet it is to be feared that there are some of this sort. I would here a little expostulate with such persons.

1. When do you expect that it will be more likely that you should be awakened and wrought upon than now? You are in a Christless condition; and yet without doubt intend to go to heaven; and therefore intend to be converted some time before you die; but this is not to be expected till you are first awakened, and deeply concerned about the welfare of your soul, and brought earnestly to seek God's converting grace. And when do you intend that this shall be? How do you lay things out in your own mind, or what projection have you about this matter? Is it ever so likely that a person will be awakened, as at such a time as this? How do we see many, who before were secure, now roused out of their sleep, and crying, What shall I do to be saved? But you are yet secure! Do you flatter yourself that it will be more likely you should be awakened when it is a dull and dead time? Do you lay matters out thus in your own mind, that though you are senseless when others are generally awakened, that yet you shall be awakened when others are generally senseless? Or do you hope to see another such time of the pouring out of God's Spirit hereafter? And do you think it will be more likely that you should be wrought upon then, than now? And why do you think so? Is it because then you shall be so much older than you are now, and so that your heart will be grown softer and more tender with age; or because you will then have stood out so much longer against the calls of the gospel, and all means of grace? Do you thing it more likely that God will give you the needed influences of his Spirit then, than now, because then you will have provoked him so much more, and your sin and guilt will be so much greater? And do you think it will be any benefit to you, to stand it out through the present season of grace, as proof against the extraordinary means of awakening there are? Do you think that this will be a good preparation for a saving work of the Spirit hereafter?

2. What means do you expect to be awakened by? As to the awakening awful things of the word of God, you have had those set before you times without number, in the most moving manner that the dispensers of the word have been capable of. As to particular solemn warnings, directed to those that are in your circumstances, you have had them frequently, and have them now from time to time. Do you expect to be awakened by awful providences? Those also you have lately had, of the most awakening nature, one after another. Do you expect to be moved by the deaths of others? We have lately had repeated instances of these. There have been deaths of old and young: the year

has been remarkable for the deaths of young persons in the bloom of life; and some of them very sudden deaths. Will the conversion of others move you? There is indeed scarce any thing that is found to have so great a tendency to stir persons up as this: and this you have been tried with of late in frequent instances; but are hitherto proof against it. Will a general pouring out of the Spirit, and seeing a concern about salvation amongst all sorts of people, do it? This means you now have, but without effect. Yea, you have all these things together; you have the solemn warnings of God's word, and awful instances of death, and the conversion of others, and see a general concern about salvation: but all together do not move you to any great concern about your own precious, immortal, and miserable soul. Therefore consider by what means it is that you expect ever to be awakened.

You have heard that it is probable some who are now awakened, will never obtain salvation; how dark then does it look upon you that remain stupidly unawakened! Those who are not moved at such a time as this, come to adult age, have reason to fear whether they are not given up to judicial hardness. I do not say they have reason to *conclude* it, but they have reason to fear it. How dark doth it look upon you, that God comes and knocks at so many persons' doors, and misses yours! that God is giving the strivings of his Spirit so generally amongst us, while you are left senseless!

3. Do you expect to obtain salvation without ever seeking it? If you are sensible that there is a necessity of your seeking in order to obtaining, and ever intend to seek, one would think you could not avoid it at such a time as this. Inquire therefore, whether you intend to go to heaven, living all your days a secure, negligent, careless life.——Or,

4. Do you think you can bear the damnation of hell? Do you imagine that you can tolerably endure the devouring fire, and everlasting burnings? Do you hope that you shall be able to grapple with the vengeance of God Almighty, when he girds himself with strength, and clothes himself with wrath? Do you think to strengthen yourself against God, and to be able to make your part good with him? 1 Cor. xx. 22, "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?" Do you flatter yourself that you shall find out ways for your ease and support, and to make it out tolerably well, to bear up your spirit in those everlasting burnings that are prepared for the devil and his angels? Ezek. xxii. 14, "Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee?"—It is a difficult thing to conceive what such Christless persons think, that are unconcerned at such a time.

III. I would direct myself to them who are grown considerably into years, and are yet in a natural condition. I would now take occasion earnestly to exhort you to improve this extraordinary opportunity, and press into the kingdom of God. You have lost many advantages that once you had, and now have not the same advantages that others have. The case is very different with you from what it is with many of your neighbors. You, above all, had need to improve such an opportunity. Now is the time for you to bestir yourself, and take the kingdom of heaven!—Consider,

1. Now there seems to be a door opened for old sinners. Now God is dealing forth freely to all sorts: his hand is opened wide, and he does not pass by old ones so much as he used to do. You are not under such advantages as others who are younger; but yet so wonderfully has God ordered it, that now you are not destitute of great advantage. Though old in sin, God has put a new and extraordinary advantage into your hands. O! improve this price you have to get wisdom! You that have been long seeking to enter in at the

strait gate and yet remain without, now take your opportunity and press in You that have been long in the wilderness, fighting with various temptations, laboring under discouragements, ready to give up the case, and have been often tempted to despair, now behold the door that God opens for you! Do not give way to discouragements now; this is not a time for it. Do not spend time in thinking, that you have done what you can already, and that you are not elected, and in giving way to other perplexing, weakening, disheartening temptations. Do not waste away this precious opportunity in such a manner. You have no time to spare for such things as these; God calls you now to something else. Improve this time in seeking and striving for salvation, and not in that which tends to hinder it.—It is no time now for you to stand talking with the devil; but hearken to God, and apply yourself to that which he does now so loudly call you to.

Some of you have often lamented the loss of past opportunities, particularly, the loss of the time of youth, and have been wishing that you had so good an opportunity again; and have been ready to say, "O! if I was young again, how would I improve such an advantage!" That opportunity which you have had in time past is irrecoverable; you can never have it again: but God can give you other advantages of another sort, that are very great, and he is so doing at this day. He is now putting a new opportunity into your hands; though not of the same kind with that which you once had, and have lost, yet in some respects as great of another kind. If you lament your folly in neglecting and losing past opportunities, then do not be guilty of the folly of neglecting the opportunity which God now gives you. This opportunity you could not have purchased, if you would have given all that you had in the world for it. But God is putting it into your hands himself, of his own free and sovercign mercy, without your purchasing it. Therefore when you have it, do not neglect it..

2. It is a great deal more likely with respect to such persons than others, that this is their last time. There will be a last time of special offer of salvation to impenitent sinners.—"God's Spirit shall not always strive with man," Gen. vi. 3. God sometimes continues long knocking at the doors of wicked men's hearts; but there are the *last* knocks, and the *last* calls that ever they shall have. And sometimes God's last calls are the loudest; and then if sinners do not hearken, he finally leaves them. How long has God been knocking at many of your doors that are old in sin! It is a great deal more likely that these are his last knocks. You have resisted God's Spirit in times past, and have hardened your heart once and again; but God will not be thus dealt with always. There is danger, that if now, after so long a time, you will not hearken, he will utterly desert you, and leave you to walk in your own counsels.

It seems by God's providence, as though God had yet an elect number amongst old sinners in this place, that perhaps he is now about to bring in. It looks as though there were some that long lived under Mr. Stoddard's ministry, that God has not utterly cast off, though they stood it out under such great means as they then enjoyed. It is to be hoped that God will now bring in a remnant from among them. But it is the more likely that God is now about finishing with them, one way or other, for their having been so long the subjects of such extraordinary means. You have seen former times of the pouring out of God's Spirit upon the town, when others were taken and you left, others were called out of darkness into marvellous light, and were brought into a glorious and happy state, and you saw not good when good came. How dark will your circumstances appear, if you shall also stand it out through this opportunity, and still be left behind! Take heed that you be not of those spoken of, Heb. vi. 7,

8, that are like the "earth that has rain coming oft upon it, and only bears briers and thorns." As we see there are some pieces of ground, the more showers of rain fall upon them, the more fruitful seasons there are, the more do the briers, and other useless and hurtful plants, that are rooted in them, grow and flourish. Of such ground the apostle says, "It is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned." The way that the husbandman takes with such ground, is, to set fire to it, to burn up the growth of it.—If you miss this opportunity, there is danger that you will be utterly rejected, and that your end will be to be burned. And if this is to be, it is to be feared, that you are not far from, but nigh unto cursing.

Those of you that are already grown old in sin, and are now under awakenings, when you feel your convictions begin to go off, if ever that should be, then remember what you have now been told; it may well then strike you to the heart!

IV. I would direct the advice to those that are young, and now under their first special convictions. I would earnestly urge such to improve this opportunity, and press into the kingdom of God.—Consider two things.

1. You have all manner of advantages now centering upon you. It is a time of great advantage for all; but your advantage is above others. There is no other sort of persons that have now so great and happy an opportunity as you have.—You have the great advantage that is common to all who live in this place, viz., that now it is a time of the extraordinary pouring out of the Spirit of God. And have you not that great advantage, the awakening influences of the Spirit of God on you in particular? And besides, you have this peculiar advantage, that you are now in your youth. And added to this, you have another unspeakable advantage, that you now are under your first convictions. Happy is he that never has hardened his heart, and blocked up his own way to heaven by backsliding, and has now the awakening influence of God's Spirit, if God does but enable him thoroughly to improve them! Such above all in the world bid fair for the kingdom of God. God is wont on such, above any kind of persons, as it were easily and readily to bestow the saving grace and comforts of his Spirit. Instances of speedy and sudden conversion are most commonly found among such. Happy are they that have the Spirit of God with them, and never have quenched it, if they did but know the price they have in their hands!

If you have a sense of your necessity of salvation, and the great worth and value of it, you will be willing to take the surest way to it, or that which has the greatest probability of success; and that certainly is, thoroughly to improve your first convictions. If you do so, it is not likely that you will fail; there is the greatest probability that you will succeed.—What is it not worth, to have such an advantage in one's hands for obtaining eternal life? The present season of the pouring out of God's Spirit, is the first that many of you who are now under awakenings have ever seen, since you came to years of understanding. On which account, it is the greatest opportunity that ever you have had, and probably by far the greatest that ever you will have. There are many here present who wish they had such an opportunity, but they never can obtain it; they cannot buy it for money; but you have it in your possession, and can improve it if you will. But yet,

2. There is on some accounts greater danger that such as are in your circumstances will fail of thoroughly improving their convictions, with respect to steadfastness and perseverance, than others. Those that are young are more unstable than elder persons. They who never had convictions before, have less

experience of the difficulty of the work they have engaged in; they are more ready to think that they shall obtain salvation easily, and are more easily discouraged by disappointments; and young persons have less reason and consideration to fortify them against temptations to backsliding. You should therefore labor now the more to guard against such temptations. By all means make but one work of seeking salvation! Make thorough work of it the first time! There are vast disadvantages that they bring themselves under, who have several turns of seeking with great intermissions. By such a course, persons exceedingly wound their own souls, and entangle themselves in many snares. Who are those that commonly meet with so many difficulties, and are so long laboring in darkness and perplexity, but those who have had several turns at seeking salvation; who have one while had convictions, and then have quenched them, and then have set about the work again, and have backslidden again, and have gone on after that manner? The children of Israel would not have been forty years in the wilderness, if they had held their courage, and had gone on as they set out; but they were of an unstable mind, and were for going back again into Egypt.—Otherwise, if they had gone right forward without discouragement, as God would have led them, they would soon have entered and taken possession of Canaan. They had got to the very borders of it when they turned back, but were thirty-eight years after that, before they got through the wilderness. Therefore, as you regard the interest of your soul, do not run yourself into a like difficulty, by unsteadiness, intermission, and backsliding; but press right forward, from henceforth, and make but one work of seeking, converting, and pardoning grace, however great, and difficult, and long a work that may be.

SERMON XXIII.

THE FOLLY OF LOOKING BACK IN FLEEING OUT OF SODOM.

LUKE xvii. 32.—Remember Lot's wife.

CHRIST is here foretelling his coming in his kingdom in answer to the question which the Pharisees asked him, viz., *When the kingdom of God should come.* And in what he says of his coming, he evidently has respect to two things, his coming at the destruction of Jerusalem, and his coming to the general judgment at the end of the world. He compares his coming at those times to the coming of God in two remarkable judgments that were past; first, to that in the time of the flood; "and as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man." Next, he compares it to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; "likewise also, as it was in the days of Lot, even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed."

Then he immediately proceeds to direct his people how they should behave themselves at the appearance of the signal of the approach of that day, referring especially to the destruction of Jerusalem. "In that day, he which shall be upon the house-top, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back." In which words Christ shows that they should make the utmost haste to flee and get out of the city to the mountains, as he commands, Matt, xxiv. 15, &c.: "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet stand in the holy place, then let them which be in Judea flee to the mountains; let him which is in the house-top not come down to take any thing out of the house, neither let him which is in the field turn back to take his clothes."

Jerusalem was like Sodom, in that it was devoted to destruction, by special divine wrath, as that was; and indeed to a more terrible destruction than Sodom was. Therefore the like direction is given concerning fleeing out of it with the utmost haste, without looking behind, as the angel gave to Lot, when he bid him flee out of Sodom. Gen. xix, "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain."—And in the text Christ enforces his counsel by the instance of Lot's wife. He bids them remember her, and take warning by her, who looked back as she was fleeing out of Sodom, and became a pillar of salt.

If it be inquired why Christ gave this direction to his people to flee out of Jerusalem, in such exceeding haste, at the first notice of the signal of her approaching destruction; I answer, it seems to be, because fleeing out of Jerusalem was a type of fleeing out of a state of sin. Escaping out of that unbelieving city typified an escape out of a state of unbelief. Therefore they were directed to flee without staying to take any thing out of their houses, to signify with what haste and greatness of concern we should flee out of a natural condition, that no respect to any worldly enjoyment should prevent or delay us one moment, and that we should flee to Jesus Christ, the refuge of souls, our strong rock, and the mount of our defence, so as in fleeing to him, to leave and forsake heartily all earthly things.

This seems to be the chief reason also why Lot was directed to make such haste, and not to look behind; because his fleeing out of Sodom was designed as

purpose to be a type of our fleeing from that state of sin and misery in which we naturally are.

DOCTRINE.

We ought not to look back when we are fleeing out of Sodom.

The following reasons may be sufficient to support this doctrines:

1. That Sodom is a city full of filthiness and abominations. It is a filthy and abominable city; it is full of those impurities that are worthy to be had in the utmost abhorrence and detestation by all. The inhabitants of it are a polluted company, they are all under the power and dominion of hateful lusts. All their faculties and affections are polluted with those vile dispositions that are unworthy of the human nature, that greatly debase it, that are exceedingly hateful to God and dreadfully incense his anger. Every kind of spiritual abomination abounds in it: in Sodom there is all filthiness that can be thought of. There is nothing so hateful and abominable but that there it is to be found, and there it abounds.

Sodom is a city full of devils and all unclean spirits; there they have their rendezvous, and there they have their dominion. There they and those that are like unto them, do sport and wallow themselves in filthiness, as it is said of mystical Babylon, Rev. xviii. 2: "Babylon is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and the cage of every unclean and hateful bird." Who would be of such a society? Who would not flee from such a city with the utmost haste, and never look back upon it, and never have the least inclination of returning, or having any thing to do there any more?

Some in Sodom may seem to carry a fair face, and make a fair outward show; but if we could look into their hearts, they are every one altogether filthy and abominable. We ought to flee from such a city, with the utmost abhorrence of the place and society, with no desire to dwell longer there, and never to discover the least inclination to return to it; but should be desirous to get to the greatest possible distance from it, that we might in no wise be partakers in her abominations.

2. We ought not to look back when fleeing out of Sodom, because Sodom is a city appointed to destruction. The cry of the city hath reached up to heaven. The earth cannot bear such a burden as her inhabitants are; she will therefore disburden herself of them, and spew them out. God will not suffer such a city to stand; he will consume it. God is a holy God, and his nature is infinitely opposite to all such uncleanness as Sodom is full of; he will therefore be a consuming fire to it. The holiness of God will not suffer it to stand, and the Majesty and justice of God require that the inhabitants of that city, who thus offend and provoke him, be destroyed. And God will surely destroy them; it is the immutable and irreversible decree of God. He hath said it, and he will do it. The decree is gone forth, and so sure as there is a God, and he is Almighty, and able to fulfil his decrees and threatenings, so surely will he destroy Sodom. Gen. xix. 12, 13, "Whatsoever thou hast in this city, bring them out of this place; for we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord, and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it." And verse 14, "Up, get ye out of this place, for the Lord will destroy this city."

This city is an accursed city; it is destined to ruin. Therefore, as we would not be partakers of her curse, and would not be destroyed, we should flee out of it, and not look behind us: Rev. xviii. 4, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."

3. We ought not to look back when fleeing out of Sodom, because the destruction to which it is appointed is exceedingly dreadful; it is appointed to utter destruction, to be wholly and entirely consumed. It is appointed to suffer the wrath of the great God, which is to be poured down from God upon it, like a dreadful storm of fire and brimstone. This city is to be filled full of the wrath of God. Every one that remains in it shall have the fire of God's wrath come down on his head and into his soul: he shall be full of fire, and full of the wrath of the Almighty. He shall be encompassed with fire without and full of fire within: his head, his heart, his bowels, and all his limbs shall be full of fire, and not a drop of water to cool him.

Nor shall he have any place to flee to for relief. Go where he will, there is the fire of God's wrath: his destruction and torment will be inevitable. He shall be destroyed without any pity. He shall cry aloud, but there shall be none to help, there shall be none to regard his lamentations, or to afford relief. The decree is gone forth, and the days come when Sodom shall burn as an oven, and all the inhabitants thereof shall be as stubble. As it was in the literal Sodom, the whole city was full of fire; in their houses there was no safety, for they were all on fire; and if they fled out into the streets, they also were full of fire. Fire continually came down out of heaven everywhere. That was a dismal time. What a cry was there then in that city, in every part of it! But there was none to help; they had nowhere to go, where they could hide their heads from fire: they had none to pity or relieve them. If they fled to their friends, they could not help them.

Now, with what haste should we flee from a city appointed to such a destruction! And how should we flee without looking behind us! How should it be our whole intent, and what we with all our minds and might are engaged about, to get at the greatest distance from a city in such circumstances! How far should we be from thinking at all of returning to a city which has such wrath hanging over it!

4. The destruction to which Sodom is appointed is a universal destruction. None that stay in it shall escape: none will have the good fortune to be in any by corner, where the fire will not search them out. All sorts, old and young, great and small, shall be destroyed. There shall be no exception of any age, or any sex, or any condition, but all shall perish together, Gen. xix. 24, 25, "Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven, and he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground." We therefore must not longer delay or look behind us; for there is no place of safety in Sodom, nor in all the plain on which Sodom is built. The mountain of safety is before us, and not behind us.

5. The destruction to which Sodom is appointed is an everlasting destruction. This is said of the literal Sodom, that it suffered the vengeance of eternal fire, Jude 7: "Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, in like manner giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." That destruction that Sodom and Gomorrah suffered was an eternal destruction: those cities were destroyed, and have never been built since, and are not capable of being rebuilt; for the land on which they stood at the time of their destruction sunk, and has been ever since covered with the lake of Sodom or the dead sea, or as it is called in Scripture, *the salt sea*. This seems to have been thus ordered on purpose to be a type of the eternal destruction of ungodly men. So that fire by which they were destroyed is called eternal fire, because it was so typi-

cally, it was a type of the eternal destruction of ungodly men; which may be in part what is intended, when it is said in that text in Jude, that they were set forth for an example, or for a type or representation of the eternal fire in which all the ungodly are to be consumed.

Sodom has in all ages since been covered with a lake which was first brought on it by fire and brimstone, to be a type of the lake of fire and brimstone in which ungodly men shall have their part forever and ever, as we read Rev. xx. 15, and elsewhere.

We ought not therefore to look back when fleeing out of Sodom, seeing that the destruction to which it is appointed is an eternal destruction; for this renders the destruction infinitely dreadful.

6. Sodom is a city appointed to swift and sudden destruction. The destruction is not only certain and inevitable, and infinitely dreadful, but it will come speedily. "Their judgment lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not," 2 Pet. ii. 3. And so Deut. xxxii. 35, "The day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste." The storm of wrath, the black clouds of divine vengeance even now every moment hang over them, just ready to break forth and come down in a dreadful manner upon them. God hath already whet his sword, and bent his bow, and made ready his arrow on the string, Psalm vii. 12. Therefore we should make haste, and not look behind us. For if we linger and stop to look back, and flee not for our lives, there is great danger that we shall be involved in the common ruin.

The destruction of Sodom is not only swift, but will come suddenly and unexpectedly. It seems to have been a fair morning in Sodom on the morning that it was destroyed. There is notice taken of the time when the sun rose that morning, Gen. xix. 23. It seems that there were no clouds to be seen, no appearance of any storm at all, much less a storm of fire and brimstone. The inhabitants of Sodom expected no such thing; even when Lot told his sons-in-law of it, they would not believe it, Gen. xix. 14. They were making merry; their hearts were at ease, they thought nothing of such a calamity at hand. But it came at once, as travail upon a woman with child, and there was no escape; as it is observed in the context, v. 28, 29, "They did eat, they drank; they bought, they sold; they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all."

So it is with wicked men; Psalm lxxiii. 19, "How are they brought into desolation in a moment; they are utterly consumed with terrors." If therefore we linger and look back, we may be suddenly overtaken and seized with destruction.

7. There is nothing in Sodom that is worth looking back upon. All the enjoyments of Sodom will soon perish in the common destruction, all will be burnt up. And surely it is not worth the while to look back on things that are perishing and consuming in the flames, as it is with all the enjoyments of sin; they are all appointed to the fire. Therefore it is foolish for any who are fleeing out of Sodom to hanker any more after them; for when they are burnt up, what good can they do? And is it worth the while for us to return back for the sake of a moment's enjoyment of them, before they are burnt, and so expose ourselves to be burnt up with them?

Lot's wife looked back, because she remembered the pleasant things that she left in Sodom. She hated to leave them; she hankered after them; she could not but look back with a wishful eye upon the city, where she had lived in such ease and pleasure. Sodom was a place of great outward plenty; they

ate the fat and drank the sweet. The soil where Sodom was built was exceedingly fruitful; it is said to be as *the garden of God*, Gen. xii. 10. And *fulness of bread* was one of the sins of the place, Ezek. xvi. 49.

Here Lot and his wife lived plentifully; and it was a place where the inhabitants wallowed in carnal pleasures and delights. But however much it abounded in these things, what were they worth now, when the city was burning? Lot's wife was very foolish in lingering in her escape for the sake of things which were all on fire. So the enjoyments, the profits, and pleasures of sin, have the wrath and curse of God on them: brimstone is scattered on them: hell-fire is ready to kindle on them. It is not therefore worth while for any person to look back after such things.

8. We are warned by messengers sent to us from God to make haste in our flight from Sodom, and not to look behind us. God sends to us his ministers, the angels of the churches, on this grand errand, as he sent the angels to warn Lot and his wife to flee for their lives, and to say and do as we have account in Gen. xix. 15, 16. If we delay or look back, now that we have had such fair warning, we shall be exceedingly inexcusable and monstrously foolish.

APPLICATION.

The use that I would make of this doctrine is, to warn those who are in a natural condition to flee out of it, and by no means to look back. While you are out of Christ, you are in Sodom, The whole history of the destruction of Sodom, with all its circumstances, seems to be inserted in the Scriptures for our warning, and is set forth for an example, as the Apostle Jude says. It, in a lively manner, typifies the case of natural men, the destruction of those that continue in a natural state, and the manner of their escape who flee to Christ. The Psalmist, when speaking of the appointed punishment of ungodly men, seems evidently to refer to the destruction of Sodom, in Psalm xi. 6: "Upon the wicked God shall rain snares, fire, and brimstone, and a horrible tempest; this shall be the portion of their cup."

Consider therefore what the state is that you are to get out of, you that are seeking an interest in Christ: you are to flee out of Sodom. Sodom is the place of your nativity, and the place where you have spent your lives hitherto. You are citizens of that city which is full of filthiness and abomination before God, that polluted and accursed city. You belong to that impure society. You not only live among them, but you are of them, you are some that have committed those abominations, and have so provoked God as you have heard. It is you that I have all this while been speaking of under this doctrine; you are the inhabitants of Sodom. Perhaps you may look on your circumstances as not very dreadful; but you dwell in Sodom. Though you may be reformed, and appear with a clean outside, and a smooth face to the world; yet as long as you are in a natural condition, you are impure inhabitants of Sodom.

The world of mankind is divided into two companies, or, as I may say, into two cities: there is the city of Zion, the church of God, the holy and beloved city; and there is Sodom, that polluted and accursed city, which is appointed to destruction. You belong to the latter of these. How much soever you may look upon yourselves better than some others, yet you are of the same city; the same company with fornicators, and drunkards, and adulterers, and common swearers, and highwaymen, and pirates, and Sodomites. How much soever you may think yourselves distinguished, as long as you are out of Christ you belong to the very same society; you are of the company, you join with them, and are

no better than they, any otherwise than as you have greater restraints. You are considered in the sight of God as fit to be ranked with them. You and they are altogether the objects of the loathing and abhorrence of God, and have the wrath of God abiding on you; you will go with them and be destroyed with them, if you do not escape from your present state. Yea, you are of the same society and the same company with the devils, for Sodom is not only the city of wicked men, but it is the hold of every foul spirit.

You belong to that city that is appointed to an awful, inevitable, universal, swift, and sudden destruction; a city that hath a storm of fire and wrath hanging over it. Many of you are convinced of the awful state you are in while in Sodom, and are making some attempts to escape from the wrath which hangs over it. Let such be warned by what hath been said, to escape for their lives, and not to look back. Look not back, unless you choose to have a share in the burning tempest that is coming down on that city. Look not back in remembrance of the enjoyments which you have had in Sodom, as hankering after the pleasant things which you have had there, after the ease, the security, and the pleasure which you have there enjoyed.

Remember Lot's wife; for she looked back, as being loth utterly and forever to leave the ease, the pleasure and plenty which she enjoyed in Sodom, and as having a mind to return to them again: remember what became of her.—Remember the children of Israel in the wilderness, who were desirous of going back again into Egypt, because they remembered the leeks and onions, &c., of Egypt: Numb. xi. 5, "We remember the flesh which we did eat in Egypt freely, the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick." Remember what was the issue of their hankering. You must be willing forever to leave all the ease, and pleasure, and profit of sin, to forsake all for salvation, as Lot forsook all, and left all he had, to escape out of Sodom. And further to enforce this warning, let me entreat all you who are in this state to consider these several things which I shall now mention.

1. The destruction of which you are in danger is infinitely more dreadful than that destruction of the literal Sodom from which Lot fled. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in a storm of fire and brimstone, was but a shadow of the destruction of ungodly men in hell, and is no more to it than a shadow or a picture is to a reality, or than painted fire is to real fire. The misery of hell is set forth by various shadows and images in Scripture, as blackness of darkness, a never dying worm, a furnace of fire, a lake of fire and brimstone, the torments of the valley of the son of Hinnom, a storm of fire and brimstone. The reason why so many similitudes are made use of, is because none of them are sufficient. Any one does but partly and very imperfectly represent the truth, and therefore God makes use of many.

You have therefore much more need to make haste in your escape, and not to look behind you, than Lot and his wife had when they fled out of Sodom; for you are every day and every moment in danger of a thousand times more dreadful storm coming on your heads, than that which came on Sodom, when the Lord rained brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven upon them; so that it will be vastly more sottish in you to look back than it was in Lot's wife.

2. The destruction you are in danger of is not only greater than the temporal destruction of Sodom, but greater than the eternal destruction of the inhabitants of Sodom. For however well you may think you have behaved yourselves, you who have continued impenitent under the glorious gospel, have sinned more, and provoked God far more, and have greater guilt upon you, than the inhabitants of Sodom; although you may seem to yourselves, and perhaps to others.

to be very harmless creatures. Matt. x. 15, "Verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city."

3. Multitudes, while they have been looking back, have been suddenly overtaken and seized by the storm of wrath. The wrath of God hath not delayed, while they have delayed; it has not waited at all for them to repent, to turn about and flee; but has presently seized them, and they have been past hope. When Lot's wife looked back, she was immediately destroyed. God had exercised patience towards her before. When she lingered at the setting out, the angels pressed her, her husband and children, to make haste. Not only so, but when they yet delayed, they laid hold on her hands, and brought her forth, and set her without the city, the Lord being merciful to her. But now when, notwithstanding this mercy, and the warnings which had been given her, she looked back, God exercised no more patience towards her, but proceeded in wrath immediately to put her to death.

Now God has in like manner been merciful to you. You in time past have been lingering; you have been warned by the angel of your danger, and pressed to make haste and flee; yet you have delayed. And now at length God hath, as it were, laid hold on you, by the convictions of his Spirit, to draw you out of Sodom; therefore *remember Lot's wife*. If now after all, you should look back, when God hath been so merciful to you, you will have reason to fear, that God will suddenly destroy you, and wait no longer on you. Multitudes when they have been looking back and putting off to another opportunity, they have never had another opportunity; they have been suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy.

4. If you look back, and live long after it, there will be great danger that you will never get any further. The only way to seek salvation is to press forward, with all your might, and still to look and press forward, never to stand still or slacken your pace. When Lot's wife stopped in her flight, and stood still in order that she might look, her punishment was, that there she was to stand forever; she never got any farther; she never got beyond that place; but there she stood as a pillar of salt, a durable pillar and monument of wrath, for her folly and wickedness.

So it very often is with backsliders, though they may live a considerable time after. When they look back, after they have been taking pains for their salvation, they lose all, they put themselves under vast disadvantages; by quenching the Spirit of God, and losing their convictions, they dreadfully harden their own hearts and stupify their souls, make way for discouragements, dreadfully strengthen and establish the interest of sin in their hearts, many ways give Satan great advantages to ruin them, and provoke God oftentimes utterly to leave them to hardness of heart. When they come to look back, their souls presently become dead and hard like Lot's wife's body: and if this be the case, though they live long after, they never get any further; it is worse for them than if they were immediately damned. When persons in fleeing out of Sodom look back, their last case is far worse than the first, Matt. xii. 43, 44, 45. And experience confirms that none ordinarily are so hard to be brought to repentance as backsliders.

5. It may well stir you up to flee for your lives, and not to look behind you, when you consider how many have lately fled to to the mountain, while you yet remain in Sodom. To what multitudes hath God given the wisdom to flee to Christ, the mountain of safety! They have fled to the little city Zoar, which God will spare and never destroy. How many have you seen of all sorts re-

sorting out of Sodom thither, as believing the word of God by the angels, that God would surely destroy that place. They are in a safe condition; they are got out of the reach of the storm; the fire and brimstone can do them no hurt there.

But you yet remain in that cursed city among that accursed company. You are yet in Sodom, which God is about so terribly to destroy, where you are in danger every minute of having snares, fire, and brimstone, come down on your head. Though so many have obtained, yet you have not obtained deliverance Good has come, but you have seen none of it. Others are happy, but no one knows what will become of you: you have no part nor lot in that glorious salvation of souls, which has lately been among us. The consideration of this should stir you up effectually to escape, and in your escape to press forward, still to press forward, and to resolve to press forward forever, let what will be in the way, to hearken to no temptation, and never to look back, or in any wise slacke nor abate your endeavors as long as you live, but if possible to increase them more and more.

6. Backsliding after such a time as this,* will have a vastly greater tendency to seal a man's damnation than at another time. The greater means men have, the louder calls, and the greater advantages they are under, the more dangerous is backsliding, the more it has a tendency to enhance guilt, to provoke God, and to harden the heart.

We, in this land of light, have long enjoyed greater advantages than the most of the world. But the advantages which persons are under now for their salvation, are perhaps tenfold to what they have been at such times as we have ordinarily lived in; and backsliding will be proportionably the greater sin, and the more dangerous to the soul. You have seen God's glory and his wonders amongst us in a most marvellous manner of late. If therefore you look back after this, there will be great danger that God will swear in his wrath, that you shall never enter into his rest; as God sware concerning them that were for going back into Egypt, after they had seen the wonders which God wrought for Israel. Numb. xiv. 22, 23, "Because all those men that have seen my glory and my miracles that I did in Egypt, and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; surely they shall not see the land which I sware unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it."—The wonders that we have seen among us of late, have been of a more glorious nature than those that the children of Israel saw in Egypt and in the wilderness.

7. We know not but that great part of the wicked world are, at this day, in Sodom's circumstances, when Lot fled out of it, having some outward temporal destruction hanging over it. It looks as if some great thing were coming; the state of things in the world seems to be ripe for some great revolution. The world has got to such a terrible degree of wickedness, that it is probable the cry of it has, by this time, reached up to heaven; and it is hardly probable that God will suffer things to go on, as they now do, much longer. It is likely that God will erelong appear in awful Majesty to vindicate his own cause; and then none will be safe that are out of Christ. Now therefore every one should flee for his life, and escape to the mountain, lest he be consumed. We cannot certainly tell what God is about to do, but this we may know, that those who are out of Christ are in a most unsafe state.

8. To enforce this warning against looking back, let me beseech you to consider the exceeding proneness which there is in the heart to it. The heart

* The time of the revival of religion at Northampton, A. D. 1735.

of man is a backsliding heart. There is in the heart a great love and hankering desire after the ease, pleasure, and enjoyments of Sodom, as there was in Lot's wife, by which persons are continually liable to temptations to look back. The heart is so much towards Sodom, that it is a difficult thing to keep the eye from turning that way, and the feet from tending thither. When men under convictions are put upon fleeing, it is a mere force, it is because God lays hold on their hands, as he did on Lot's and his wife's, and drags them so far. But the tendency of the heart is to go back to Sodom again.

Persons are very prone to backsliding, also through discouragement. They are apt to be discouraged. The heart is unsteady, soon tired, soon gives out, is apt to listen to discouraging temptations. A little difficulty and delay soon overcome its feeble resolutions. And discouragement tends to backsliding: it weakens persons' hands, lies as a dead weight on their hearts, and makes them drag heavily: and if it continue long, it very often issues in security and senselessness. Convictions are often shaken off that way; they begin first to go off with discouragement.

Backsliding is a disease that is exceeding secret in its way of working. It is a flattering distemper; it works like a consumption, wherein persons often flatter themselves that they are not worse, but something better, and in a hopeful way to recover, till a few days before they die. So backsliding commonly comes on gradually, and steals on men insensibly, and they still flatter themselves that they are not backslidden. They plead that they are seeking yet, and they hope they have not lost their convictions. And by the time they find it out, and cannot pretend so any longer, they are commonly so far gone, that they care not much if they have lost their convictions. And when it is come to that, it is commonly a gone case with persons as to those convictions.

Thus they blind themselves, and keep themselves insensible of their own disease, and so are not terrified with it, nor awakened to use means for relief, till it is past cure.

Thus it is that backsliding commonly comes upon persons that have for some time been under any considerable convictions, and afterwards lose them. Let the consideration of this your danger excite you to the greatest care and diligence to keep your hearts, and to watchfulness and constant prayer against backsliding. And let it put you upon endeavors to strengthen your resolutions of guarding against every thing that tends to the contrary, that you may indeed hold out to the end, for *then shall you know, if you follow on to know the Lord*

SERMON XXIV.

RUTH'S RESOLUTION.

RUTH i. 16.—And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.

THE historical things in this book of Ruth, seem to be inserted in the canon of the Scripture, especially on two accounts:

First, Because Christ was of Ruth's posterity. The Holy Ghost thought fit to take particular notice of that marriage of Boaz with Ruth, whence sprang the Saviour of the world. We may often observe it, that the Holy Spirit who indited the Scriptures, often takes notice of little things, or minute occurrences, that do but remotely relate to Jesus Christ.

Secondly, Because this history seems to be typical of the calling of the Gentile church, and indeed of the conversion of every believer. Ruth was not originally of Israel, but was a Moabitess, an alien from the commonwealth of Israel: but she forsook her own people, and the idols of the Gentiles, to worship the God of Israel, and to join herself to that people. Herein she seems to be a type of the Gentile church, and also of every sincere convert. Ruth was the remote mother of Christ; he came of her posterity: so the church is Christ's mother, as she is represented, Rev. xii., at the beginning. And so also is every true Christian his mother. Matt. xii. 50, "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." Christ is what the soul is in travail with, at the new birth. Ruth forsook all her natural relations, and her own country, the land of her nativity, and all her former possessions there, for the sake of the God of Israel; as every true Christian forsakes all for Christ. Psalm xlv. 10, "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house."

Naomi was now returning out of the land of Moab, into the land of Israel, with her two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth; who will represent to us two sorts of professors of religion: Orpah, those who indeed make a fair profession, and seem to set out well, but continue only for a while, and then turn back; Ruth, those who are sound and sincere, and therefore are steadfast and persevering in their way. Naomi, in the preceding verses, represents to her daughters the difficulties of their leaving their own country to go with her. And in this verse may be observed,

1. The remarkable conduct and behavior of Ruth on this occasion; with what inflexible resolution she cleaves to Naomi, and follows her. When Naomi first arose to return from the country of Moab into the land of Israel, Orpah and Ruth both set out with her; and Naomi exhorts them both to return. And both wept, and seemed as if they could not bear the thoughts of leaving her, and appeared as if they were resolved to go with her. Verse 10, "And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people." Then Naomi says to them again, "Turn again, my daughters, go your way," &c. And then they were greatly affected again, and Orpah returned and went back. Now Ruth's steadfastness in her purpose had a greater trial, but yet is not overcome: "She clave unto her" verse 14. Then Naomi speaks to her again, verse 15·

"Behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods; return thou after thy sister-in-law." And then she shows her immovable resolution in the text and following verse.

2. I would particularly observe that wherein the virtuousness of this her resolution consists, viz., that it was for the sake of the God of Israel, and that she might be one of his people, that she was thus resolved to cleave to Naomi: "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." It was for God's sake that she did thus; and therefore her so doing is afterwards spoken of as a virtuous behavior in her, chap. ii. 11, 12: "And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been showed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law since the death of thine husband; and how thou hast left thy father, and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore. The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust." She left her father and mother, and the land of her nativity, to come and trust under the shadow of God's wings: and she had indeed a full reward given her, as Boaz wished; for besides immediate spiritual blessings to her own soul, and eternal rewards in another world, she was rewarded with plentiful and prosperous outward circumstances in the family of Boaz. And God raised up David and Solomon of her seed, and established the crown of Israel (the people that she chose before her own people) in her posterity; and, which is much more, of her seed he raised up Jesus Christ, in whom all the families of the earth are blessed.

From the words thus opened, I observe this for the subject of my present discourse:—"When those that we have formerly been conversant with, are turning to God, and joining themselves to his people, it ought to be our firm resolution, that we will not leave them; but that their people shall be our people, and their God our God."

It sometimes happens, that of those who have been conversant one with another—who have dwelt together as neighbors, and have been often together as companions, or united in their relation, and have been together in darkness, bondage, and misery, in the service of Satan—some are enlightened, and have their minds changed, are made to see the great evil of sin, and have their hearts turned to God. They are influenced by the Holy Spirit of God, to leave their company that are on Satan's side, and to join themselves with that blessed company that are with Jesus Christ. They are made willing to forsake the tents of wickedness, to dwell in the land of uprightness with the people of God.

And sometimes this proves a final parting or separation between them and those with whom they have been formerly conversant. Though it may be no parting in outward respects, they may still dwell, and converse one with another; yet in other respects, it sets them at a great distance. One is a child of God, and the other his enemy; one is in a miserable, and the other in a happy condition; one is a citizen of the heavenly Zion, the other is under condemnation to hell. They are no longer together in those respects wherein they used to be together. They used to be of one mind to serve sin, and do Satan's work; now they are of contrary minds. They used to be together in worldliness and sinful vanity; now they are of exceeding different dispositions. They are separated as they are in different kingdoms; the one remains in the kingdom of darkness, the other is translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. And sometimes they are finally separated in these respects: while one dwells in the land of Israel, and in the house of God; the other, like Orpah, lives and dies in the land of Moab.

Now it is lamentable, it is awful being parted so. It is doleful, when of those who have formerly been together in sin, some turn to God, and join themselves with his people, that it should prove a *parting* between them and their former companions and acquaintance. It should be our firm and inflexible resolution in such a case, that it shall be no parting, but that we will follow them, that their people shall be our people, and their God our God; and that for the following reasons:

I. Because their *God* is a glorious God. There is none like him, who is infinite in glory and excellency. He is the most high God, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders. His name is excellent in all the earth, and his glory is above the earth and the heavens. Among the gods there is none like unto him; there is none in heaven to be compared to him, nor are there any among the sons of the mighty that can be likened unto him. Their God is the fountain of all good, and an inexhaustible fountain; he is an all-sufficient God, able to protect and defend them and do all things for them. He is the King of glory, the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle: a strong rock, and a high tower. There is none like the God of Jeshurun, who rideth on the heaven in their help, and in his excellency on the sky: the eternal God is their refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. He is a God who hath all things in his hands, and does whatsoever he pleases: he killeth and maketh alive; he bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up; he maketh poor and maketh rich: the pillars of the earth are the Lord's. Their God is an infinitely holy God; there is none holy as the Lord. And he is infinitely good and merciful. Many that others worship and serve as gods, are cruel beings, spirits that seek the ruin of souls; but this is a God that delighteth in mercy; his grace is infinite, and endures for ever. He is love itself, an infinite fountain and ocean of it.

Such a God is their God! Such is the excellency of Jacob! Such is the God of them who have forsaken their sins and are converted! They have made a wise choice who have chosen this for their God. They have made a happy exchange indeed, that have exchanged sin, and the world, for such a God!

They have an excellent and glorious Saviour, who is the only-begotten Son of God; the brightness of his Father's glory; one in whom God from eternity had infinite delight; a Saviour of infinite love; one that has shed his own blood, and made his soul an offering for their sins, and one that is able to save them to the uttermost.

II. Their *people* are an excellent and happy people. God has renewed them, and stamped his own image upon them, and made them partakers of his holiness. They are more excellent than their neighbors, Prov. xii. 26. Yea, they are the excellent of the earth, Psalm xvi. 3. They are lovely in the sight of the angels; and they have their souls adorned with those graces that in the sight of God himself are of great price.

The people of God are the most excellent and happy society in the world. That God whom they have chosen for their God, is their Father; he has pardoned all their sins, and they are at peace with him; and he has admitted them to all the privileges of his children. As they have devoted themselves to God, so God has given himself to them. He is become their salvation, and their portion: his power and mercy, and all his attributes, are theirs. They are in a safe state, free from all possibility of perishing: Satan has no power to destroy them. God carries them on eagle's wings, far above Satan's reach, and above the reach of all the enemies of their souls. God is with them in this world; they have his gracious presence. God is for them; who then can be against

them? As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so Jehovah is round about them. God is their shield, and their exceeding great reward; and their fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ: and they have the divine promise and oath, that in the world to come they shall dwell forever in the glorious presence of God.

It may well be sufficient to induce us to resolve to cleave to those that forsake their sins and idols to join themselves with this people, that God is with them, Zech. viii. 23: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, in those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you." So should persons, as it were, take hold of the skirt of their neighbors and companions that have turned to God, and resolve that they will go with them, because God is with them.

III. *Happiness* is nowhere else to be had, but in their God, and with their people. There are that are called gods many, and lords many. Some make gods of their pleasures; some choose Mammon for their god; some make gods of their own supposed excellencies, or the outward advantages they have above their neighbors: some choose one thing for their god, and others another. But men can be happy in no other but the God of Israel: he is the only fountain of happiness. Other gods cannot help in calamity; nor can any of them afford what the poor empty soul stands in need of. Let men adore those other gods never so much, and call upon them never so earnestly, and serve them never so diligently, they will nevertheless remain poor, wretched, unsatisfied, undone creatures. All other people are miserable, but that people whose God is the Lord.—The world is divided into two societies: *the people of God*, the little flock of Jesus Christ, that company that we read of, Rev. xiv. 4, "These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins: these are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth: these were redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits unto God, and to the Lamb:" and, *those that belong to the kingdom of darkness*, that are without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. All that are of this latter company are wretched and undone; they are the enemies of God, and under his wrath and condemnation. They are the devil's slaves, that serve him blindfold, and are befooled and ensnared by him, and hurried along in the broad way to eternal perdition.

IV. When those that we have formerly been conversant with are turning to God, and to his people, their *example* ought to influence us. Their example should be looked upon as the call of God to us, to do as they have done. God, when he changes the heart of one, calls upon another; especially does he loudly call on those that have been their friends and acquaintance. We have been influenced by their examples in evil; and shall we cease to follow them, when they make the wisest choice that ever they made, and do the best thing that ever they did? If we have been companions with them in worldliness, in vanity, in unprofitable and sinful conversation, it will be a hard case, if there must be a parting now, because we are not willing to be companions with them in holiness and true happiness. Men are greatly influenced by seeing one another's prosperity in other things. If those whom they have been much conversant with, grow rich, and obtain any great earthly advantages, it awakens their ambition, and eager desire after the like prosperity: how much more should they be influenced, and stirred up to follow them, and be like them, when they obtain that spiritual and eternal happiness, that is of infinitely more worth, than all the prosperity and glory of this world!

V. Our *resolutions* to cleave to and follow those that are turning to God, and joining themselves to his people, ought to be *fixed* and strong, because of the great difficulty of it. If we will cleave to them, and have their God for our God, and their people for our people, we must mortify and deny all our lusts, and cross every evil appetite and inclination, and forever part with all sin. But our lusts are many and violent. Sin is naturally exceeding dear to us; to part with it is compared to plucking out our right eyes. Men may refrain from wonted ways of sin for a little while, and may deny their lusts in a partial degree, with less difficulty; but it is heart-rending work, finally to part with all sin, and to give our dearest lusts a bill of divorce, utterly to send them away But this we must do, if we would follow those that are truly turning to God: yea, we must not only forsake sin, but must, in a sense, forsake all the world: Luke xiv. 33, "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all he hath, he cannot be my disciple." That is, he must forsake all in his heart, and must come to a thorough disposition and readiness actually to quit all for God, and the glorious spiritual privileges of his people, whenever the case may require it; and that without any prospect of any thing of the like nature, or any worldly thing whatsoever, to make amends for it; and all to go into a strange country, a land that has hitherto been unseen; like Abraham, who being called of God, "went out of his own country, and from his kindred, and from his father's house, for a land that God should show him, not knowing whither he went."

Thus, it was a hard thing for Ruth to forsake her native country, her father and mother, her kindred and acquaintance, and all the pleasant things she had in the land of Moab, to dwell in the land of Israel, where she never had been. Naomi told her of the difficulties once and again. They were too hard for her sister Orpah; the consideration of them turned her back after she was set out. Her resolution was not firm enough to overcome them. But so firmly resolved was Ruth, that she broke through all; she was steadfast in it, that, let the difficulty be what it would, she would not leave her mother-in-law. So persons had need to be very firm in their resolution to conquer the difficulties that are in the way of cleaving to them who are indeed turning from sin to God.

Our cleaving to them, and having their God for our God, and their people for our people, depends on our resolution and choice; and that in two respects.

1. The firmness of resolution in using means in order to it, is the way to have means effectual. There are means appointed in order to our becoming some of the true Israel, and having their God for our God; and the thorough use of these means is the way to have success; but not a slack or slighty use of them. And that we may be thorough, there is need of strength of resolution, a firm and inflexible disposition and bent of mind to be universal in the use of means, and to do what we do with our might, and to persevere in it. Matt. xi. 12, "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."

2. A choosing of their God, and their people, with a full determination, and with the whole soul, is the condition of a union with them. God gives every man his choice in this matter: as Orpah and Ruth had their choice, whether they would go with Naomi into the land of Israel, or stay in the land of Moab A natural man may choose deliverance from hell; but no man doth ever heartily choose God and Christ, and the spiritual benefits that Christ has purchased, and the happiness of God's people, till he is converted. On the contrary, he is averse to them; he has no relish of them; and is wholly ignorant of their inestimable worth and value.

Many carnal men seem to choose these things, but do it not really; as Orpah

seemed at first to choose to forsake Moab to go into the land of Israel: but when Naomi came to set before her the difficulty of it, she went back; and thereby showed that she was not fully determined in her choice, and that her whole soul was not in it as Ruth's was.

APPLICATION.

The use that I shall make of what has been said, is to move sinners to this resolution, with respect to those amongst us that have lately turned to God, and joined themselves to the flock of Christ. Through the abundant mercy and grace of God to us in this place, it may be said of many of you that are in a Christless condition, that you have lately been left by those that were formerly with you in such a state. Some of those with whom you have formerly been conversant, have lately forsaken a life of sin and the service of Satan, and have turned to God, and fled to Christ, and joined themselves to that blessed company that are with him. They formerly were with you in sin and in misery; but now they are with you no more in that state or manner of life. They are changed, and have fled from the wrath to come; they have chosen a life of holiness here, and the enjoyment of God hereafter. They were formerly your associates in bondage, and were with you in Satan's business; but now you have their company no longer in these things. Many of you have seen those you live with, under the same roof, turning from being any longer with you in sin, to be with the people of Jesus Christ. Some of you that are husbands, have had your wives; and some of you that are wives, have had your husbands; some of you that are children, have had your parents; and parents have had your children; many of you have had your brothers and sisters; and many your near neighbors, and acquaintance, and special friends; many of you that are young have had your companions: I say, many of you have had those that you have been concerned with, leaving you, forsaking that doleful life and wretched state in which you still continue. God, of his good pleasure and wonderful grace, hath lately caused in this place multitudes to forsake their old abodes in the land of Moab, and under the gods of Moab, and go into the land of Israel, to put their trust under the wings of the Lord God of Israel. Though you and they have been nearly related, and have dwelt together, or have been often together and intimately acquainted, they have been taken, and you hitherto left! O let it not be the foundation of a final parting! But earnestly follow them; be firm in your resolution in this matter. Do not as Orpah did, who, though at first she made as though she would follow Naomi, yet when she had the difficulty set before her, went back: but say as Ruth, "I will not leave thee; but where thou goest, I will go: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." Say as she said, and do as she did. Consider the excellency of their God, and their Saviour, and the happiness of their people, the blessed state that they are in, and the doleful state you are in.

You who are *old* sinners, who have lived long in the service of Satan, have lately seen some that have travelled with you in the paths of sin these many years, turning to God. They with you enjoyed great means and advantages, had calls and warnings with you, and with you passed through remarkable times of the pouring out of God's Spirit in this place, and hardened their hearts and stood it out with you, and with you have grown old in sin; yet you have seen some of them turning to God, i. e., you have seen those evidences of it in them, whence you may rationally judge that it is so. O! let it not be a final parting! You have been thus long together in sin, and under condemnation; let it be your

firm resolution, that, if possible, you will be with them still, now they are in a holy and happy state, and that you will follow them into the holy and pleasant land.—You that tell of your having been seeking salvation for many years, (though, without doubt, in a poor dull way, in comparison of what you ought to have done,) have seen some old sinners and old seekers, as you are, obtaining mercy. God has lately roused them from their dulness, and caused them to alter their hand, and put them on more thorough endeavors; and they have now, after so long a time, heard God's voice, and have fled for refuge to the rock of ages. Let this awaken earnestness and resolution in you. Resolve that you will not leave them.

You who are in your *youth*, how many have you seen of your age and standing, that have of late hopefully chosen God for their God, and Christ for their Saviour! You have followed them in sin, and have perhaps followed them into vain company; and will you not now follow them to Christ?—And you who are *children*, know that there have lately been some of your sort who have repented of their sins, loved the Lord Jesus Christ, and trusted in him, and are become God's children, as we have reason to hope: let it stir you up to resolve to your utmost to seek and cry to God, that you may have the like change made in your hearts, that their people may be your people, and their God your God.

You who are great sinners, who have made yourselves distinguishingly guilty by the wicked practices you have lived in, know that there are some of your sort who have lately (as we have reason to hope) had their hearts broken for sin, and have forsaken it, and trusted in the blood of Christ for the pardon of it. They have chosen a holy life, and have betaken themselves to the ways of wisdom: let it excite and encourage you resolutely to cleave to them, and earnestly to follow them.

Let the following things be considered:

1. That your soul is as precious as theirs. It is immortal as theirs is; and stands in as much need of happiness, and can as ill bear eternal misery. You was born in the same miserable condition that they were, having the same wrath of God abiding on you. You must stand before the same Judge; who will be as strict in judgment with you as with them; and your own righteousness will stand you in no more stead before him than theirs; and therefore you stand in as absolute necessity of a Saviour as they. Carnal confidences can no more answer your end than theirs; nor can this world or its enjoyments serve to make you happy without God and Christ more than them. When the bridegroom comes, the foolish virgins stand in as much need of oil as the wise, Matt. xxv. at the beginning.

2. Unless you follow them in their turning to God, their conversion will be a foundation of an eternal separation between you and them. You will be in different interests, and in exceeding different states, as long as you live; they the children of God, and you the children of Satan; and you will be parted in another world; when you come to die, there will be a vast separation made between you: Luke xvi. 26, "And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you, cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence." And you will be parted at the day of judgment. You will be parted at Christ's first appearance in the clouds of heaven. While they are caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, to be ever with the Lord, you will remain below, confined to this cursed ground, that is kept in store, reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men. You will appear separated from them while you stand before the great judgment-seat, they being at the right hand,

while you are set at the left: Matt. xxv. 32, 33, "And before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left." And you shall then appear in exceeding different circumstances: while you stand with devils, in the image and deformity of devils, and in ineffable horror and amazement, they shall appear in glory, sitting upon thrones, as assessors with Christ, and as such passing judgment upon you, 1 Cor. vi. 2. And what shame and confusion will then cover you, when so many of your cotemporaries, your equals, your neighbors, relations, and companions, shall be honored, and openly acknowledged, and confessed by the glorious Judge of the universe, and Redeemer of saints, and shall be seen by you sitting with him in such glory. You shall appear to have neglected your salvation, and not to have improved your opportunities, and rejected the Lord Jesus Christ, the same person that will then appear as your great Judge, and you shall be the subjects of wrath, and, as it were, trodden down in eternal contempt and disgrace: Dan. xii. 2, "Some shall rise to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." And what a wide separation will the sentence then passed and executed make between you and them! When you shall be sent away out of the presence of the Judge with indignation and abhorrence, as cursed and loathsome creatures, they shall be sweetly accosted and invited into his glory as his dear friends, and the blessed of his Father! When *you*, with all that vast throng of wicked and accursed men and devils, shall descend with loud lamentings, and horrid shrieks, into that dreadful gulf of fire and brimstone, and shall be swallowed up in that great and everlasting furnace; *they* shall joyfully, and with sweet songs of glory and praise, ascend with Christ, and all that beauteous and blessed company of saints and angels, into eternal felicity, in the glorious presence of God, and the sweet embraces of his love. You and they shall spend eternity in such a separation, and immensely different circumstances! You have been intimately acquainted and nearly related, closely united and mutually conversant in this world; and you have taken delight in each other's company! And shall it be—after you have been together a great while, each of you in undoing yourselves, enhancing your guilt, and heaping up wrath—that their so wisely changing their minds and their course, and choosing such happiness for themselves, should now at length be the beginning of such an exceeding and everlasting separation between you and them? How awful will it be to be parted so!

3. Consider the great encouragement that God gives you, earnestly to strive for the same blessing that others have obtained. There is great encouragement in the word of God to sinners to seek salvation, in the revelation we have of the abundant provision made for the salvation even of the chief of sinners, and in the appointment of so many means to be used with and by sinners, in order to their salvation; and by the blessing which God in his word connects with the means of his appointment. There is hence great encouragement for all, at all times, that will be thorough in using of these means. But now God gives extraordinary encouragement in his providence, by pouring out his Spirit so remarkably amongst us, and bringing savingly home to himself all sorts, young and old, rich and poor, wise and unwise, sober and vicious, old self-righteous seekers, and profligate livers: no sort are exempt. There is at this day amongst us the loudest call, and the greatest encouragement, and the widest door opened to sinners, to escape out of a state of sin and condemnation, that perhaps God ever granted in New England. Who is there that has an immortal soul, so sottish as not to improve such an opportunity, and that will not bestir himself with all

his might? How unreasonable is negligence, and how exceeding unreasonable is discouragement, at such a day as this! Will you be so stupid as to neglect your soul now? Will any mortal amongst us be so unreasonable as to lag behind, or look back in discouragement, when God opens such a door? Let every person be thoroughly awake! Let every one encourage himself now to press forward, and fly for his life!

4. Consider how earnestly desirous they that have obtained are that you should follow them, and that their people should be your people, and their God your God. They desire that you should partake of that great good which God has given them, and that unspeakable and eternal blessedness which he has promised them. They wish and long it. If you do not go with them, and are not still of their company, it will not be for want of their willingness, but your own. That of Moses to Hobab is the language of every true saint of your acquaintance to you, Numb. x. 29, "We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel." As Moses, when on his journey through the wilderness, following the pillar of cloud and fire, invited Hobab—with whom he had been acquainted in the land of Midian, where Moses had formerly dwelt with him—to go with him and his people to Canaan, to partake with them in the good that God had promised them; so do those of your friends and acquaintance invite you, out of a land of darkness and wickedness, where they have formerly been with you, to go with them to the heavenly Canaan. The company of saints, the true church of Christ, invite you. The lovely bride calls you to the marriage supper. She hath authority to invite guests to her own wedding; and you ought to look on her invitation and desire, as the call of Christ the bridegroom; for it is the voice of his Spirit in her: Rev. xxii. 17, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." Where seems to be a reference to what has been said, chap. xix. 7—9, "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted, that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called to the marriage-supper of the Lamb." It is with respect to this her marriage-supper that she, from the motion of the Spirit of the Lamb in her, says, Come. So that you are invited on all hands; all conspire to call you. God the Father invites you: this is the King who has made a marriage for his Son; and he sends forth his servants, the ministers of the gospel, to invite the guests. And the Son himself invites you: it is he that speaks, Rev. xvii. 17, "And let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst, come; and whosoever will, let him come." He tells us who he is in the foregoing verse, "I Jesus, the root and offspring of David, the bright and morning star." And God's ministers invite you, and all the church invites you; and there will be joy in the presence of the angels of God that hour that you accept the invitation.

5. Consider what a doleful company will be left after this extraordinary time of mercy is over. We have reason to think that there will be a number left. We read that when Ezekiel's healing waters increased so abundantly, and the healing effect of them was so very general; yet there were certain places, where the water came, that never were healed: Ezek. xlvii. 9—11, "And it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live. And there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed, and every thing shall live whither the river cometh. And it shall come to pass, that the

fishers shall stand upon it, from En-gedi even unto En-eglaim; they shall be a place to spread forth nets; their fish shall be according to their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many. But the miry places thereof, and the marshes thereof, shall not be healed, they shall be given to salt." And even in the apostles' times, when there was such wonderful success of the gospel wherever they came, there were some that did not believe: Acts xiii. 48, "And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed." And chap. xxviii. 24, "And some believed, and some believed not." So we have no reason to expect but there will be some left amongst us. It is to be hoped it will be but a small company: but what a doleful company will it be! How darkly and awfully will it look upon them! If you shall be of that company, how well may your friends and relations lament over you, and bemoan your dark and dangerous circumstances! If you would not be one of them, make haste, delay not, and look not behind you. Shall all sorts obtain, shall every one press into the kingdom of God, while you stay loitering behind in a doleful undone condition? Shall every one take heaven, while you remain with no other portion but this world? Now take up that resolution, that if it be possible you will cleave to them that have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before them. Count the cost of a thorough, violent, and perpetual pursuit of salvation, and forsake all, as Ruth forsook her own country, and all her pleasant enjoyments in it. Do not do as Orpah did; who set out, and then was discouraged, and went back: but hold out with Ruth through all discouragement and opposition. When you consider others that have chosen the better part, let that resolution be ever firm with you: "Where thou goest, I will go; where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."

SERMON XXV.

GREAT GUILT NO OBSTACLE TO THE PARDON OF THE RETURNING SINNER.

PSALM xxv. 11.—For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity; for it is great.

IT is evident by some passages in this psalm, that when it was penned, it was a time of affliction and danger with David. This appears particularly by the 15th and following verses: "Mine eyes are ever towards the Lord; for he shall pluck my feet out of the net," &c. His distress makes him think of his sins, and leads him to confess them, and to cry to God for pardon, as is suitable in a time of affliction. See ver. 7: "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions;" and verse 18, "Look upon mine affliction, and my pain, and forgive all my sins."

It is observable in the text, what arguments the psalmist makes use of in pleading for pardon.

1. He pleads for pardon *for God's name's sake.* He has no expectation of pardon for the sake of any righteousness or worthiness of his for any good deeds he had done, or any compensation he had made for his sins; though if man's righteousness could be a just plea, David would have had as much to plead as most. But he begs that God would do it for his own name's sake, for his own glory, for the glory of his own free grace, and for the honor of his own covenant faithfulness.

2. The psalmist pleads *the greatness of his sins* as an argument for mercy. He not only doth not plead his own righteousness, or the smallness of his sins; he not only doth not say, Pardon mine iniquity, for I have done much good to counterbalance it; or, Pardon mine iniquity, for it is small, and thou hast no great reason to be angry with me; mine iniquity is not so great, that thou hast any just cause to remember it against me; mine offence is not such but that thou mayest well enough overlook it; but on the contrary he says, *Pardon mine iniquity, for it is great;* he pleads the greatness of his sin, and not the smallness of it; he enforces his prayer with this consideration, that his sins are very heinous.

But how could he make this a plea for pardon? I answer, Because the greater his iniquity was, the more *need* he had of pardon. It is as much as if he had said, Pardon mine iniquity, for it is so great that I cannot bear the punishment; my sin is so great that I am in necessity of pardon; my case will be exceedingly miserable, unless thou be pleased to pardon me. He makes use of the greatness of his sin, to enforce his plea for pardon, as a man would make use of the greatness of calamity in begging for relief. When a beggar begs for bread, he will plead the greatness of his poverty and necessity. When a man in distress cries for pity, what more suitable plea can be urged than the extremity of his case? And God allows such a plea as this: for he is moved to mercy towards us by nothing in us but the miserableness of our case. He doth not pity sinners because they are worthy, but because they need his pity.

DOCTRINE. *If we truly come to God for mercy, the greatness of our sin will be no impediment to pardon.* If it were an impediment, David would never have used it as a plea for pardon, as we find he does in the text. The following things are needful in order that we truly come to God for mercy:

I. That we should see *our misery*, and be *sensible* of our need of mercy. They who are not sensible of their misery cannot truly look to God for mercy; for it is the very notion of divine mercy, that it is the goodness and grace of God to the miserable. Without misery in the object, there can be no exercise of mercy. To suppose mercy without supposing misery, or pity without calamity, is a contradiction: therefore men cannot look upon themselves as proper objects of mercy, unless they first know themselves to be miserable; and so, unless this be the case, it is impossible that they should come to God for mercy. They must be sensible that they are the children of wrath; that the law is against them, and that they are exposed to the curse of it: that the wrath of God abideth on them; and that he is angry with them every day while they are under the guilt of sin. They must be sensible that it is a very dreadful thing to be the object of the wrath of God; that it is a very awful thing to have him for their enemy; and that they cannot bear his wrath. They must be sensible that the guilt of sin makes them miserable creatures, whatever temporal enjoyments they have; that they can be no other than miserable, undone creatures, so long as God is angry with them; that they are without strength, and must perish, and that eternally, unless God help them. They must see that their case is utterly desperate, for any thing that any one else can do for them; that they hang over the pit of eternal misery; and that they must necessarily drop into it, if God have not mercy on them.

II. They must be sensible that they *are not worthy* that God should have mercy on them. They who truly come to God for mercy, come as beggars, and not as creditors: they come for mere mercy, for sovereign grace, and not for any thing that is due. Therefore, they must see that the misery under which they lie is justly brought upon them, and that the wrath to which they are exposed is *justly* threatened against them; and that they have *deserved* that God should *be* their enemy, and should *continue* to be their enemy. They must be sensible that it would be just with God to do as he hath threatened in his holy law, viz., make them the objects of his wrath and curse in hell to all eternity. They who come to God for mercy in a right manner are not disposed to find fault with his severity; but they come in a sense of their own utter unworthiness, as with ropes about their necks, and lying in the dust at the foot of mercy.

III. They must come to God for mercy in and *through Jesus Christ* alone. All their hope of mercy must be from the consideration of what he is, what he hath done, and what he hath suffered; and that there is no other name given under heaven, among men, whereby we can be saved, but that of Christ; that he is the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world; that his blood cleanses from all sin, and that he is so worthy, that all sinners who are in him may well be pardoned and accepted.—It is impossible that any should *come* to God for mercy, and at the same time have no *hope* of mercy. Their coming to God for it, implies that they have some hope of obtaining, otherwise they would not think it worth the while to come. But they that come in a right manner have all their hope through Christ, or from the consideration of his redemption, and the sufficiency of it.—If persons thus come to God for mercy, the greatness of their sins will be no impediment to pardon. Let their sins be ever so many, and great, and aggravated, it will not make God in the least degree more backward to pardon them. This may be made evident by the following considerations:

1. *The mercy of God* is as sufficient for the pardon of the greatest sins, as for the least; and that because his mercy is infinite. That which is infinite, is as much above what is great, as it is above what is small. Thus God being

infinitely great, he is as much above kings as he is above beggars; he is as much above the highest angel, as he is above the meanest worm. One infinite measure doth not come any nearer to the extent of what is infinite than another.—So the mercy of God being infinite, it must be as sufficient for the pardon of all sin, as of one. If one of the least sins be not beyond the mercy of God, so neither are the greatest, or ten thousand of them.—However, it must be acknowledged, that this alone doth not prove the doctrine. For though the mercy of God may be as sufficient for the pardon of great sins as others; yet there may be other obstacles, besides the want of mercy. The mercy of God may be sufficient, and yet the other attributes may oppose the dispensation of mercy in these cases.—Therefore I observe,

2. That the *satisfaction of Christ* is as sufficient for the removal of the greatest guilt, as the least: 1 John i. 7, "The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin." Acts xiii. 39, "By him all that believe are justified from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." All the sins of those who truly come to God for mercy, let them be what they will, are satisfied for, if God be true who tells us so; and if they be satisfied for, surely it is not incredible, that God should be ready to pardon them. So that Christ having fully satisfied for all sin, or having wrought out a satisfaction that is sufficient for all, it is now no way inconsistent with the glory of the divine attributes to pardon the greatest sins of those who in a right manner come unto him for it.—God may now pardon the greatest sinners without any prejudice to the honor of his holiness. The holiness of God will not suffer him to give the least countenance to sin, but inclines him to give proper testimonies of his hatred of it. But Christ having satisfied for sin, God can now love the sinner, and give no countenance at all to sin, however great a sinner he may have been. It was a sufficient testimony of God's abhorrence when he took the guilt of it upon himself. Nothing can more show God's abhorrence of sin than this. If all mankind had been eternally damned, it would not have been so great a testimony of it.

God may, through Christ, pardon the *greatest sinner* without any prejudice to the honor of his majesty. The honor of the divine majesty indeed requires satisfaction; but the sufferings of Christ fully repair the injury. Let the contempt be ever so great, yet if so honorable a person as Christ undertakes to be a Mediator for the offender, and suffers so much for him, it fully repairs the injury done to the Majesty of heaven and earth. The sufferings of Christ fully satisfy justice. The justice of God, as the supreme Governor and Judge of the world, requires the punishment of sin. The supreme Judge must judge the world according to a rule of justice. God doth not show mercy as a Judge, but as a sovereign; therefore his exercise of mercy as a sovereign, and his justice as a judge, must be made consistent one with another; and this is done by the sufferings of Christ, in which sin is punished fully, and justice answered. Rom. iii. 25, 26, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."—The law is no impediment in the way of the pardon of the greatest sin, if men do but truly come to God for mercy; for Christ hath fulfilled the law, he hath borne the curse of it, in his sufferings: Gal. iii. 13, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."

3. Christ *will not refuse* to save the greatest sinners, who in a right manner

come to God for mercy; for this is his work. It is his business to be a Saviour of sinners; it is the work upon which he came into the world; and therefore he will not object to it. He did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance, Matt. ix. 13. Sin is the very evil which he came into the world to remedy: therefore he will not object to any man, that he is very sinful. The more sinful he is, the more need of Christ.—The sinfulness of man was the reason of Christ's coming into the world; this is the very misery from which he came to deliver men. The more they have of it, the more need they have of being delivered: "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick," Matt. ix. 12. The physician will not make it an objection against healing a man who applies to him, that he stands in great need of his help. If a physician of compassion comes among the sick and wounded, surely he will not refuse to heal those that stand in most need of healing, if he be able to heal them.

4. Herein doth the *glory of grace* by the redemption of Christ much consist, viz., in its sufficiency for the pardon of the greatest sinners. The whole contrivance of the way of salvation is for this end, to glorify the free grace of God. God had it on his heart from all eternity to glorify this attribute; and therefore it is, that the device of saving sinners by Christ was conceived. The greatness of divine grace appears very much in this, that God by Christ saves the greatest offenders. The greater the guilt of any sinner is, the more glorious and wonderful is the grace manifested in his pardon: Rom. v. 20, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." The apostle, when telling how great a sinner he had been, takes notice of the abounding of grace in his parcon, of which his great guilt was the occasion: 1 Tim. i. 13, "Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious. But I obtained mercy; and the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant, with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." The Redeemer is glorified, in that he proves sufficient to redeem those who are exceeding sinful, in that his blood proves sufficient to wash away the greatest guilt, in that he is able to save men to the uttermost, and in that he redeems even from the greatest misery. It is the honor of Christ to save the greatest sinners, when they come to him, as it is the honor of a physician that he cures the most desperate diseases or wounds. Therefore, no doubt Christ will be willing to save the greatest sinners, if thy come to him; for he will not be backward to glorify himself, and to commend the value and virtue of his own blood. Seeing he hath so laid out himself to redeem sinners, he will not be unwilling to show, that he is able to redeem to the uttermost.

5. Pardon is as much *offered and promised* to the greatest sinners as any, if they will come aright to God for mercy. The invitations of the gospel are always in universal terms: as, Ho, every one that thirsteth; Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden; and, Whosoever will, let him come. And the voice of Wisdom is to men in general: Prov. viii. 4, "Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men." Not to moral men, or religious men, but *to you, O men.* So Christ promises, John vi. 37, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." This is the direction of Christ to his apostles, after his resurrection, Mark xvi. 15, 16, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved." Which is agreeable to what the apostle saith, that "the gospel was preached to every creature which is under heaven," Col. i. 23.

APPLICATION.

The proper *use* of this subject is, to encourage sinners whose consciences are

burdened with a sense of guilt, immediately to go to God through Christ for mercy. If you go in the manner we have described, the arms of mercy are open to embrace you. You need not be at all the more fearful of coming because of your sins, let them be ever so black. If you had as much guilt lying on each of your souls as all the wicked men in the world, and all the damned souls in hell; yet if you come to God for mercy, sensible of your own vileness, and seeking pardon only through the free mercy of God in Christ, you would not need to be afraid; the greatness of your sins would be no impediment to your pardon. Therefore, if your souls be burdened, and you are distressed for fear of hell, you need not bear that burden and distress any longer. If you are but *willing*, you may freely come and unload yourselves, and cast all your burdens on Christ, and rest in him.

But here I shall speak to some OBJECTIONS which some awakened sinners may be ready to make against what I now exhort them to.

I. Some may be ready to object, I have spent my youth and all the best of my life in sin, and I am afraid God will not accept of me, when I offer him only mine old age. To this I would answer,—1. Hath God said anywhere, that he will not accept of *old sinners* who come to him? God hath often made offers and promises in universal terms; and is there any such exception put in? Doth Christ say, All that thirst, let them come to me and drink, *except* old sinners? Come to me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, except old sinners, and I will give you rest? Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out, if he be not an old sinner? Did you ever read any such exception anywhere in the Bible? And why should you give way to exceptions which you make out of your own heads, or rather which the devil puts into your heads, and which have no foundation in the word of God? Indeed it is more rare that old sinners are willing to come, than others; but if they do come, they are as readily accepted as any whatever.

2. When God accepts of young persons, it is not for the sake of the service which they are like to do him afterwards, or because youth is better worth accepting than old age. You seem entirely to mistake the matter, in thinking that God will not accept of you because you are old: as though he readly accepted of persons in their youth, because their youth is better worth his acceptance; whereas it is only for the sake of Jesus Christ, that God is willng to accept of any.

You say, your life is almost spent, and you are afraid that the best time for serving God is past; and that therefore God will not now accept of you; as if it were for the sake of the service which persons are like to do him, after they are converted, that he accepts of them. But a self-righteous spirit is at the bottom of such objections. Men cannot get off from the notion, that it is for some goodness or service of their own, either done or expected to be done that God accepts of persons, and receives them into favor. Indeed they who deny God their youth, the best part of their lives, and spend it in the service of Satan, dreadfully sin and provoke God; and he very often leaves them to hardness of heart, when they are grown old. But if they are willing to accept of Christ when old, he is as ready to receive them as any others; for in that matter God hath respect only to Christ and his worthiness.

II. But I am afraid that I have committed sins that are peculiar to reprobates. I have sinned against light, and strong convictions of conscience; I have sinned presumptuously; and have so resisted the strivings of the Spirit of God, that I am afraid I have committed such sins as none of God's elect ever commit. I cannot think that God will ever leave one whom he intends to save,

to go on and commit sins against so much light and conviction, and with such horrid presumption. Others may say, I have had risings of heart against God; blasphemous thoughts, a spiteful and malicious spirit; and have abused mercy and the strivings of the Spirit, trampled upon the Saviour, and my sins are such as are peculiar to those who are reprobated to eternal damnation. To all this I would answer,

1. There is no sin peculiar to reprobates but the sin against the Holy Ghost. Do you read of any other in the word of God? And if you do not read of any there, what ground have you to think any such thing? What other rule have we, by which to judge of such matters, but the divine word? If we venture to go beyond that, we shall be miserably in the dark. When we pretend to go further in our determinations than the word of God, Satan takes us up, and leads us. It seems to you that such sins are peculiar to the reprobate, and such as God never forgives. But what reason can you give for it, if you have no word of God to reveal it? Is it because you cannot see how the mercy of God is sufficient to pardon, or the blood of Christ to cleanse from such presumptuous sins? If so, it is because you never yet saw how great the mercy of God is; you never saw the sufficiency of the blood of Christ, and you know not how far the virtue of it extends. Some elect persons have been guilty of all manner of sins, except the sin against the Holy Ghost; and unless you have been guilty of this, you have not been guilty of any that are peculiar to reprobates.

2. Men may be less likely to believe, for sins which they have committed, and not the less readily pardoned when they do believe. It must be acknowledged that some sinners are in more danger of hell than others. Though all are in great danger, some are less likely to be saved. Some are less likely ever to be converted and to come to Christ: but all who do come to him are alike readily accepted; and there is as much encouragement for one man to come to Christ as another.—Such sins as you mention are indeed exceeding heinous and provoking to God, and do in an especial manner bring the soul into danger of damnation, and into danger of being given to final hardness of heart; and God more commonly gives men up to the judgment of final hardness for such sins, than for others. Yet they are not peculiar to reprobates; there is but one sin that is so, viz., that against the Holy Ghost. And notwithstanding the sins which you have committed, if you can find it in your hearts to come to Christ, and close with him, you will be accepted not at all the less readily because you have committed such sins.—Though God doth more rarely cause some sorts of sinners to come to Christ than others, it is not because his mercy or the redemption of Christ is not as sufficient for them as others, but because in wisdom he sees fit so to dispense his grace, for a restraint upon the wickedness of men; and because it is his will to give converting grace in the use of means, among which this is one, viz., to lead a moral and religious life, and agreeable to our light, and the convictions of our own consciences. But when once any sinner is willing to come to Christ, mercy is as ready for him as for any. There is no consideration at all had of his sins; let him have been ever so sinful, his sins are not remembered; God doth not upbraid him with them.

III. But had I not better stay till I shall have made myself better, before I presume to come to Christ? I have been, and see myself to be very wicked now; but am in hopes of mending myself, and rendering myself at least not so wicked: then I shall have more courage to come to God for mercy.—In answer to this,

1. Consider how unreasonably you act. You are striving to set up yourselves for your own saviours; you are striving to get something of your own,

on the account of which you may the more readily be accepted. So that by this it appears that you do not seek to be accepted only on Christ's account. And is not this to rob Christ of the glory of being your only Saviour? Yet this is the way in which you are hoping to make Christ willing to save you.

2. You can never come to Christ at all, unless you first see that he will not accept of you the more readily for any thing that you can do. You must first see, that it is utterly in vain for you to try to make yourselves better on any such account. You must see that you can never make yourselves any more worthy, or less unworthy, by any thing which you can perform.

3. If ever you truly come to Christ, you must see that there is enough in him for your pardon, though you be no better than you are. If you see not the sufficiency of Christ to pardon you, without any righteousness of your own to recommend you, you never will come so as to be accepted of him. The way to be accepted is to come—not on any such encouragement, that now you have made yourselves better, and more worthy, or not so unworthy, but—on the mere encouragement of Christ's worthiness, and God's mercy.

4. If ever you truly come to Christ, you must come to him to make you better. You must come as a patient comes to his physician, with his diseases or wounds to be cured. Spread all your wickedness before him, and do not plead your goodness; but plead your badness, and your necessity on that account: and say, as the psalmist in the text, not Pardon mine iniquity, for it is not so great as it was, but, "Pardon mine iniquity, for it is great."

SERMON XXVI.

THE PEACE WHICH CHRIST GIVES HIS TRUE FOLLOWERS.

John xiv. 27.—Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you.

These words are a part of a most affectionate and affecting discourse that Christ had with his disciples the same evening in which he was betrayed, knowing that he was to be crucified the next day. This discourse begins with the 31st verse of the xiiith chapter, and is continued to the end of the xvith chapter. Christ began his discourse after he had partook of the passover with them, after he had instituted and administered the sacrament of the Supper, and after Judas was gone out, and none were left but his true and faithful disciples; whom he now addresses as his dear children. This was the last discourse that ever Christ had with them before his death. As it was his parting discourse, and as it were his dying discourse, so it is, on many accounts, the most remarkable of all the discourses of Christ which we have recorded in our Bibles.

It is evident this discourse made a deep impression on the minds of the disciples; and we may suppose that it did so, in a special manner, on the mind of John, the beloved disciple, whose heart was especially full of love to him, and who had just then been leaning on his bosom. In this discourse Christ had told his dear disciples that he was going away, which filled them with sorrow and heaviness. The words of the text are some of the words which Christ said to comfort them, and to relieve their sorrow. He supports them with the promise of that peace which he would leave with them, and which they would have in him and with him, when he was gone.

This promise he delivers in three emphatical expressions, which illustrate one another. "Peace I leave with you." As much as to say, though I am going away, yet I will not take all comfort away with me. While I have been with you, I have been your support and comfort, and you have had peace in me in the midst of the losses you have sustained, and troubles you have met with in this evil generation. This peace I will not take from you, but leave it with you with great advantage, and in more full possession.

"My peace I give unto you." Christ, by calling it HIS peace, signifies two things:

1. That it was his own, that which he had to give. It was the peculiar benefit that he had to bestow on his children; now he was about to die and leave the world as to his human presence. Silver and gold he had none: for while in his estate of humiliation he was poor. The foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests; but the Son of man had not where to lay his head, Luke ix. 58. He had no earthly estate to leave to his disciples who were, as it were, his family: but he had peace to give them.

2. It was his peace that he gave them; as it was the same kind of peace which he himself enjoyed. The same excellent and divine peace which he ever had in God, and which he was about to receive in his exalted state in a vastly greater perfection and fulness: for the happiness Christ gives to his people, is a participation of his own happiness; agreeable to what Christ says in this same dying discourse of his, chap. xv. 11, "These things have I said unto you, that my joy might remain in you." And in his prayer that he made with his

disciples at the conclusion of this discourse, chap. xvii. 13: "And now come I to thee, and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves." And verse 22, "And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them."

Christ here alludes to men's making their wills before death. When parents are about to leave their children by death, they are wont, in their last will and testament, to give them their estate; that estate which they themselves were wont to possess and enjoy. So it was with Christ when he was about to leave the world, with respect to the peace which he gave his disciples; only with this difference, that earthly parents, when they die, though they leave the same estate to their children which they themselves heretofore enjoyed; yet, when the children come to the full possession of it, they enjoy it no more; the parents do not enjoy it with their children. The time of the full possession of parents and children is not together. Whereas with respect to Christ's peace, he did not only possess it himself before his death, when he bequeathed it to his disciples: but also afterwards more fully; so that they were received to possess it with him.

The third and last expression is, "*not as the world giveth, give I unto you.*" Which is as much as to say, My gifts and legacies, now I am going to leave the world, are not like those which the rich and great men of the world are wont to leave to their heirs, when they die. They bequeath to their children their worldly possessions; and it may be, vast treasures of silver and gold, and sometimes an earthly kingdom. But the thing that I give you is my peace, a vastly different thing from what they are wont to give, and which cannot be obtained by all that they can bestow, or their children inherit from them.

DOCTRINE.

That peace which Christ, when he died, left as a legacy to all his true saints, is very diverse from all those things which the men of this world bequeath to their children, when they die.

I. Christ at his death made over the blessings of the new covenant to believers, as it were in a will or testament.

II. A great blessing that Christ made over to believers in this his testament was his peace.

III. This legacy of Christ is exceeding diverse from all that any of the men of this world ever leave to their children when they die.

I. Christ at his death made over the blessings of the new covenant to believers, as it were in a will or testament.

The new covenant is represented by the apostle as Christ's last will and testament. Heb. ix. 15, 16, "And for this cause he is the Mediator of the New Testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator." What men convey by their will or testament, is their own estate. So Christ in the new covenant conveys to believers his own inheritance, so far as they are capable of possessing and enjoying it. They have that eternal life given to them in their measure, which Christ himself possesses. They live in him, and with him, and by a participation of his life. *Because he lives they live also.* They inherit his kingdom; the same kingdom which the Father appointed unto him. Luke xxii. 29, "And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me." They shall reign on

his throne, Rev. iii. 21. They have his glory given to them, John xvii. And because all things are Christ's, so in Christ all things are also the saints', 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22.

Men in their wills or testaments most commonly give their estates to their children. So believers are in Scripture represented as Christ's children. Heb. ii. 13, "Behold I, and the children which God hath given me." Men most commonly make their wills a little before their death. So Christ did, in a very special and solemn manner, make over and confirm to his disciples the blessings of the new covenant, on the evening before the day of his crucifixion, in that discourse of which my text is a part. The promises of the new covenant were never so particularly expressed, and so solemnly given forth by Christ in all the time that he was upon earth, as in this discourse. Christ promises them mansions in his Father's house, chap. xiv. 1, 2, 3. Here he promises them whatever blessings they should need and ask in his name, chap. xv. 7, xiv. 23, 24. Here he does more solemnly and fully than anywhere else, give forth and confirm the promise of the Holy Spirit, which is the sum of the blessings of the covenant of grace, chap. xiv. 16, xvii. 26, xv. 25, xvi. 7. Here he promises them his own and his Father's gracious presence and favor, chap. xiv. 18, xix. 20, 21. Here he promises them peace in the text. Here he promises them his joy, chap. xv. 11. Here he promises grace to bring forth holy fruits, chap. xv. 11. And victory over the world, chap. xvi. 33. And indeed there seems to be nowhere else so full and complete an edition of the covenant of grace in the whole Bible, as in this dying discourse of Christ with his eleven true disciples.

This covenant between Christ and his children is like a will or testament also in this respect, that it becomes effectual by, and no other way than by, his death; as the apostle observes it is with a will or testament among men. For a testament is of force after men are dead, Heb. ix. 17. For though the covenant of grace indeed was of force before the death of Christ, yet it was of force no otherwise than by his death. So that his death then did virtually intervene; being already undertaken and engaged. As a man's heirs come by the legacies bequeathed to them no otherwise than by the death of the testator, so men come by the spiritual and eternal inheritance no otherwise than by the death of Christ. If it had not been for the death of Christ they never could have obtained it.

II. A great blessing that Christ, in his testament, hath bequeathed to his true followers, is his peace. Here are two things that I would observe particularly, viz., that Christ hath bequeathed to believers *true* peace; and then, that the peace he has given them is *his* peace.

1. Our Lord Jesus Christ has bequeathed true peace and comfort to his followers. Christ is called the Prince of Peace, Isa. ix. 6. And when he was born into the world, the angels, on that joyful and wonderful occasion, sang, Glory to God in the highest, on earth *peace;* because of that peace which he should procure for, and bestow on the children of men; peace with God, and peace one with another, and tranquillity and peace within themselves: which last is especially the benefit spoken of in the text. This Christ has procured for his followers, and laid a foundation for their enjoyment of, in that he has procured for them the other two, viz, peace with God, and with one another. He has procured for them peace and reconciliation with God, and his favor and friendship; in that he satisfied for their sins, and laid a foundation for the perfect removal of the guilt of sin, and the forgiveness of all their trespasses, and wrought out for them a perfect and glorious righteousness, most acceptable to

God, and sufficient to recommend them to God's full acceptance, and to the adoption of children, and to the eternal fruits of his fatherly kindness.

By these means true saints are brought into a state of freedom from condemnation, and all the curses of the law of God. Rom. viii. 34, "Who is he that condemneth?" And by these means they are safe from that dreadful and eternal misery which naturally they are exposed to, and are set on high out of the reach of all their enemies, so that the gates of hell and powers of darkness can never destroy them; nor can wicked men, though they may persecute them, ever hurt them. Rom. viii. 31, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Numb. xxiii. 8, "How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed?" Verse 23, "There is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel." By these means they are out of reach of death. John vi. 4, ix. 50, 51, "This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die." By these means death with respect to them has lost its sting, and is no more worthy of the name of death. 1 Cor. xv. 55, "O death, where is thy sting?" By these means they have no need to be afraid of the day of judgment, when the heavens and earth shall be dissolved. Psal. xlvi. 1, 2, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." Yea, a true saint has reason to be at rest in an assurance, that nothing can separate him from the love of God, Rom. viii. 38, 39.

Thus he that is got into Christ, is in a safe refuge from every thing that might disturb him; for this is that man spoken of, Isa. xxxii. 2: "And a man shall be as a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest. As rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." And hence they that dwell in Christ have that promise fulfilled to them which we have in the 18th verse of the same chapter: "And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places."

And the true followers of Christ have not only ground of rest and peace of soul, by reason of their safety from evil, but on account of their sure title and certain enjoyment of all that good which they stand in need of, living, dying, and throughout all eternity. They are on a sure foundation for happiness, are built on a rock that can never be moved, and have a fountain that is sufficient, and can never be exhausted. The covenant is ordered in all things and sure, and God has passed his word and oath, "That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold ont he hope set before us." The infinite Jehovah is become their God, who can do every thing for them. He is their portion who has an infinite fulness of good in himself. "He is their shield and exceeding great reward." As great a good is made over to them as they desire, or can desire or conceive of. Yea, as great and sweet as they are capable of; and to be continued as long as they desire; and this is made as sure as they can desire: therefore they have reason to put their hearts at rest, and be at peace in their minds.

Besides, he has bequeathed peace to the souls of his people, as he has procured for them and made over to them, the spirit of grace and true holiness; which has a natural tendency to the peace and quietness of the soul. It has such a tendency as it implies a discovery and relish of a suitable and sufficient good. It brings a person into a view of divine beauty, and to a relish of that good which is a man's proper happiness; and so it brings the soul to its true centre. The soul by this means is brought to rest, and ceases from restlessly inquiring, as others do, who will show us any good; and wandering to and fro, like lost sheep, seeking rest, and finding none. The soul hath found him who

is as the apple tree among the trees of the wood, and sits down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit is sweet unto his taste, Cant. ii. 2. And thus is that saying of Christ fulfilled, John iv. 14, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst." And besides, true grace naturally tends to peace and quietness, as it settles things in the soul in their due order, sets reason on the throne, and subjects the senses and affections to its government, which before were uppermost, and put all things into confusion and uproar in the soul. Grace tends to tranquillity, as it mortifies tumultuous desires and passions, subdues the eager and insatiable appetites of the sensual nature and greediness after the vanities of the world. It mortifies such principles as hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, envyings, and the like, which are a continual source of inward uneasiness and perturbation; and supplies those sweet, calming, and quieting principles of humility, meekness, resignation, patience, gentleness, forgiveness, and sweet reliance on God. It also tends to peace, as it fixes the aim of the soul to a certain end; so that the soul is no longer distracted and drawn contrariwise by opposite ends to be sought, and opposite portions to be obtained, and many masters of contrary wills and commands to be served; but the heart is fixed in the choice of one certain, sufficient, and unfailing good; and the soul's aim at this, and hope of it, is like an anchor to it, that keeps it steadfast, that it should no more be driven to and fro by every wind.

2. This peace which Christ has left as a legacy to his true followers, is *his* peace. It is the peace which himself enjoys. This is what I take to be that which is principally intended in the expression. It is the peace that he enjoyed while on earth, in his state of humiliation: though he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, and was everywhere hated and persecuted by men and devils, and had no place of rest in this world; yet in God his Father, he had peace. We read of his rejoicing in spirit, Luke x. 21. So Christ's true disciples, though in the world they have tribulation, yet in God have peace.

When Christ had finished his labors and sufferings, and rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven, then he entered into his rest, and into a state of most blessed, perfect, and everlasting peace: delivered by his own sufferings from our imputed guilt, acquitted and justified of the Father on his resurrection; having obtained a perfect victory over all his enemies; was received of his Father into heaven, the rest which he had prepared for him, there to enjoy his heart's desire fully and perfectly to all eternity. And then were those words in the first six verses of the 21st Psalm, which have respect to Christ, fulfilled. This peace and rest of the Messiah is doubtless exceeding glorious. Isai. xi. 10, "And his rest shall be glorious." This rest is what Christ has procured, not only for himself, but also his people, by his death; and has bequeathed it to them, that they may enjoy it with him, imperfectly in this world, and perfectly and eternally in another world.

That peace, which has been described, which believers enjoy, is a participation of the peace which their glorious Lord and Master himself enjoys, by virtue of the same blood of Christ, by which Christ himself has entered into rest; it is in a participation of this same justification; for believers are justified with Christ. As he was justified when he rose from the dead, and as he was made free from our guilt, which he had as our surety, so believers are justified in him and through him. It is as being accepted of God in the same righteousness: it is in the favor of the same God and heavenly Father that they enjoy peace. "I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." It is in a participation of the same spirit; for believers have the spirit of Christ. He had the Spirit given to him not by measure, and of his fulness do they all

receive, and grace for grace. As the oil, poured on the head of Aaron, went down to the skirts of his garments, so the Spirit poured on Christ, the head, descends to all his members. It is partaking of the same grace of the Spirit that believers enjoy this peace, John i. 16.

It is as being united to Christ, and living by a participation of his life, as a branch lives by the life of the vine. It is as partaking of the same love of God. John xvii. 26, "That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them." It is as having a part with him in his victory over the same enemies: and also as having an interest in the same kind of eternal rest and peace. Eph. ii. 5, 6, "Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ—and hath raised us up together, and hath made us sit together in heavenly places."

III. This legacy of Christ to his true disciples is very diverse from all that the men of this world ever leave to their children when they die. The men of this world, many of them, when they come to die, have great estates to bequeath to their children, an abundance of the good things of this world, large tracts of ground, perhaps in a fruitful soil, covered with flocks and herds. They sometimes leave to their children stately mansions, and vast treasures of silver, gold, jewels, and precious things, fetched from both the Indies, and from every side of the globe of the earth. They leave them wherewith to live in much state and magnificence, and make a great show among men, to fare very sumptuously, and swim in worldly pleasures. Some have crowns, sceptres, and palaces, and great monarchies to leave to their heirs. But none of these things are to be compared to that blessed peace of Christ which he has bequeathed to his true followers. These things are such as God commonly, in his providence, gives his worst enemies, those whom he hates and despises most. But Christ's peace is a precious benefit, which he reserves for his peculiar favorites. These worldly things, even the best of them, that the men and princes of the world leave for their children, are things which God in his providence throws out to those whom he looks on as dogs; but Christ's peace is the bread of his children. All these earthly things are but empty shadows, which, however men set their hearts upon them, are not bread, and can never satisfy their souls; but this peace of Christ is a truly substantial, satisfying food, Isai. lv. 2. None of those things if men have them to the best advantage, and in ever so great abundance, can give true peace and rest to the soul, as is abundantly manifest not only in reason, but experience; it being found in all ages, that those who have the most of them, have commonly the least quietness of mind. It is true, there may be a kind of quietness, a false peace they may have in their enjoyment of worldly things; men may bless their souls, and think themselves the only happy persons, and despise others; may say to their souls, as the rich man did, Luke xii. 19, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." But Christ's peace, which he gives to his true disciples, vastly differs from this peace that men may have in the enjoyments of the world, in the following respects:

1. Christ's peace is a reasonable peace and rest of soul; it is what has its foundation in light and knowledge, in the proper exercises of reason, and a right view of things; whereas the peace of the world is founded in blindness and delusion. The peace that the people of Christ have, arises from their having their eyes open, and seeing things as they be. The more they consider, and the more they know of the truth and reality of things, the more they know what is true concerning themselves, the state and condition they are in; the more they know of God, and the more certain they are that there is a God, and the more they know what manner of being he is, the more certain they are of an-

other world and future judgment, and of the truth of God's threatenings and promises; the more their consciences are awakened and enlightened, and the brighter and the more searching the light is that they see things in, the more is their peace established: whereas, on the contrary, the peace that the men of the world have in their worldly enjoyments can subsist no otherwise than by their being kept in ignorance. They must be blindfolded and deceived, otherwise they can have no peace: do but let light in upon their consciences, so that they may look about them and see what they are, and what circumstances they are in, and it will at once destroy all their quietness and comfort. Their peace can live nowhere but in the dark. Light turns their ease into torment. The more they know what is true concerning God and concerning themselves, the more they are sensible of the truth concerning those enjoyments which they possess; and the more they are sensible what things now are, and what things are like to be hereafter, the more will their calm be turned into a storm. The worldly man's peace cannot be maintained but by avoiding consideration and reflection. If he allows himself to think, and properly to exercise his reason, it destroys his quietness and comfort. If he would establish his carnal peace, it concerns him to put out the light of his mind, and turn beast as fast as he can. The faculty of reason, if at liberty, proves a mortal enemy to his peace. It concerns him, if he would keep alive his peace, to contrive all ways that may be, to stupify his mind and deceive himself, and to imagine things to be otherwise than they be. But with respect to the peace which Christ gives, reason is its great friend. The more this faculty is exercised, the more it is established. The more they consider and view things with truth and exactness, the firmer is their comfort, and the higher their joy. How vast a difference is there between the peace of a Christian and the worldling! How miserable are they who cannot enjoy peace any otherwise than by hiding their eyes from the light, and confining themselves to darkness; whose peace is properly stupidity; as the ease that a man has who has taken a dose of stupifying poison, and the ease and pleasure that a drunkard may have in a house on fire over his head, or the joy of a distracted man in thinking that he is a king, though a miserable wretch confined in bedlam: whereas, the peace which Christ gives his true disciples, is the light of life, something of the tranquillity of heaven, the peace of the celestial paradise, that has the glory of God to lighten it.

2. Christ's peace is a virtuous and holy peace. The peace that the men of the world enjoy is vicious; it is a vile stupidity, that depraves and debases the mind, and makes men brutish. But the peace that the saints enjoy in Christ, is not only their comfort, but it is a part of their beauty and dignity. The Christian tranquillity, rest, and joy of real saints, are not only unspeakable privileges, but they are virtues and graces of God's Spirit, wherein the image of God in them does partly consist. This peace has its source in those principles that are in the highest degree virtuous and amiable, such as poverty of spirit, holy resignation, trust in God, divine love, meekness, and charity; the exercise of such blessed fruits of the Spirit as are spoken of, Gal. 22, 23.

3. This peace greatly differs from that which is enjoyed by the men of the world, with regard to its exquisite sweetness. It is a peace that passes all that natural men enjoy in worldly things so much, that it passes their understanding and conception, Phil. iv. 7. It is exquisitely sweet, because it has so firm a foundation as the everlasting rock that never can be moved. It is sweet, because perfectly agreeable to reason. It is sweet, because it rises from holy and divine principles, that as they are the virtue, so they are the proper happiness of men.

It is exquisitely sweet, because of the greatness of the objective good that

the saints enjoy, and have peace and rest in, being no other than the infinite bounty and fulness of that God who is the fountain of all good. It is sweet, on account of the fulness and perfection of that provision that is made for it in Christ and the new covenant, where there is a foundation laid for the saints' perfect peace; and hereafter they shall actually enjoy perfect peace; and though their peace is not now perfect, it is not owing to any defect in the provision made, but in their own imperfection and misery, sin and darkness; and because as yet they do partly cleave to the world and seek peace from thence, and do not perfectly cleave to Christ. But the more they do so, and the more they see of the provision there is made, and accept of it, and cleave to that alone, the nearer are they brought to perfect tranquillity, Isaiah xxvi. 5.

4. The peace of the Christian infinitely differs from that of the worldling, in that it is unfailing and eternal peace. That peace which carnal men have in the things of the world, is, according to the foundation that it is built upon, of short continuance; like the comfort of a dream, 1 John ii. 17, 1 Cor. vii. 31. These things, the best and most durable of them, are like bubbles on the face of the water; they vanish in a moment, Hos. x. 7.

But the foundation of the Christian's peace is everlasting; it is what no time, no change, can destroy. It will remain when the body dies; it will remain when the mountains depart and the hills shall be removed, and when the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll. The fountain of his comfort shall never be diminished, and the stream shall never be dried. His comfort and joy is a living spring in the soul, a well of water springing up to everlasting life.

APPLICATION.

The use that I would make of this doctrine, is to improve it, as an inducement unto all to forsake the world, no longer seeking peace and rest in its vanities, and to cleave to Christ and follow him. Happiness and rest are what all men are in pursuit of. But the things of the world, wherein most men seek it, can never afford it; they are laboring and spending themselves in vain. But Christ invites you to come to him, and offers you this peace which he gives his true followers, that so much excels all that the world can afford, Isa. lv. 2, 3.

You that have hitherto spent your time in the pursuit of satisfaction and peace in the profit and glory of the world, or in the pleasures and vanities of youth, have this day an offer made to you of that excellent and everlasting peace and blessedness, which Christ has purchased with the price of his own blood, and bestows only on those that are his peculiar favorites, his redeemed ones, that are his portion and treasure, the objects of his everlasting love. As long as you continue to reject those offers and invitations of Christ, and continue in a Christless condition, you never will enjoy any true peace or comfort; but in whatever circumstances you are, you will be miserable; you will be like the prodigal, that in vain endeavored to fill his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: the wrath of God will abide upon, and misery will attend you wherever you go, which you never will, by any means, be able to escape. Christ gives peace to the most sinful and miserable that come to him. He heals the broken in heart and bindeth up their wounds. But it is impossible that they should have peace, that continue in their sins, Isa. lvii. 19—21. There is no peace between God and them; as they have the guilt of sin remaining in their souls, and are under the dominion of sin, so God's indignation continually burns against them, and therefore there is reason why they should travail in pain all their days.

While you continue in such a state, you live in a state of dreadful uncertainty what will become of you, and in continual danger. When you are in the

enjoyment of things that are the most pleasing to you, where your heart is best suited, and most cheerful, yet you are in a state of condemnation, hanging over the infernal pit, with the sword of divine vengeance hanging over your head, having no security one moment from utter and remediless destruction. What reasonable peace can any one enjoy in such a state as this. What does it signify to take such a one and clothe him in gorgeous apparel, or to set him on a throne, or at a prince's table, and feed him with the rarest dainties the earth affords? And how miserable is the ease and cheerfulness that such have! What a poor kind of comfort and joy is it that such take in their wealth and pleasures for a moment, while they are the prisoners of divine justice, and wretched captives of the devil, and have none to befriend them or defend them, being without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world!

I invite you now to a better portion. There are better things provided for the sinful miserable children of men. There is a surer comfort and more durable peace: comfort that you may enjoy in a state of safety and on a sure foundation: a peace and rest that you may enjoy with reason and with your eyes open; having all your sins forgiven, your greatest and most aggravated transgressions blotted out as a cloud, and buried as in the depths of the sea, that they may never be found more; and being not only forgiven, but accepted to favor; being the objects of God's complacence and delight; being taken into God's family and made his children; and having good evidence that your names were written on the heart of Christ before the world was made, and that you have an interest in that covenant of grace that is well ordered in all things and sure; wherein is promised no less than life and immortality, an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, a crown of glory that fades not away; being in such circumstances, that nothing shall be able to prevent your being happy to all eternity; having for the foundation of your hope, that love of God which is from eternity unto eternity; and his promise and oath, and his omnipotent power, things infinitely firmer than mountains of brass. The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, yea, the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, yet these things will never be abolished.

In such a state as this you will have a foundation of peace and rest through all changes, and in times of the greatest uproar and outward calamity be defended from all storms, and dwell above the floods, Psalm xxxii. 6, 7; and you shall be at peace with every thing, and God will make all his creatures throughout all parts of his dominion, to befriend you, Job v. 19, 24. You need not be afraid of any thing that your enemies can do unto you, Psalm iii. 5, 6. Those things that now are most terrible to you, viz., death, judgment, and eternity, will then be most comfortable, the most sweet and pleasant objects of your contemplation, at least there will be reason that they should be so. Hearken therefore to the friendly counsel that is given you this day, turn your feet into the way of peace, forsake the foolish and live; forsake those things which are no other than the devil's baits, and seek after this excellent peace and rest of Jesus Christ, that peace of God which passes all understanding. Taste and see; never was any disappointed that made a trial, Prov. xxiv. 13, 14. You will not only find those spiritual comforts that Christ offers you to be of a surpassing sweetness for the present, but they will be to your soul as the dawning light that shines more and more to the perfect day; and the issue of all will be your arrival in heaven, that land of rest, those regions of everlasting joy, where your peace and happiness will be perfect, without the least mixture of trouble or affliction, and never be interrupted nor have an end.

SERMON XXVII.

A DIVINE AND SUPERNATURAL LIGHT, IMMEDIATELY IMPARTED TO THE SOUL BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD, SHOWN TO BE BOTH A SCRIPTURAL AND RATIONAL DOCTRINE.

MATTHEW xvi. 17.—And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

CHRIST says these words to Peter upon occasion of his professing his faith in him as the Son of God. Our Lord was inquiring of his disciples, who men said he was; not that he needed to be informed, but only to introduce and give occasion to what follows. They answer, that some said he was John the Baptist, and some Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the Prophets. When they had thus given an account who others said he was, Christ asks them, who they said he was? Simon Peter, whom we find always zealous and forward, was the first to answer: he readily replied to the question, *Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God.*

Upon this occasion, Christ says as he does TO him, and OF him in the text: in which we may observe,

1. That Peter is pronounced blessed on this account. BLESSED ART THOU.—"Thou art a happy man, that thou art not ignorant of this, that I am CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD. Thou art distinguishingly happy. Others are blinded, and have dark and deluded apprehensions, as you have now given an account, some thinking that I am Elias, and some that I am Jeremias, and some one thing, and some another; but none of them thinking right, all of them misled. Happy art thou, that art so distinguished as to know the truth in this matter."

2. The evidence of this his happiness declared; viz., that God, and he ONLY, had REVEALED IT to him. This is an evidence of his being BLESSED.

FIRST. As it shows how peculiarly favored he was of God above others; q. d., "How highly favored art thou, that others that are wise and great men, the Scribes, Pharisees, and Rulers, and the nation in general, are left in darkness, to follow their own misguided apprehensions; and that thou shouldst be singled out, as it were, by name, that my Heavenly Father should thus set his love, on THEE, SIMON BARJONA. This argues thee blessed, that thou shouldst thus be the object of God's distinguishing love."

SECONDLY. It evidences his blessedness also, as it intimates that this knowledge is above any that FLESH and BLOOD can REVEAL. "This is such knowledge as my FATHER WHICH IS IN HEAVEN only can give: it is too high and excellent to be communicated by such means as other knowledge is. Thou art BLESSED, that thou knowest that which God alone can teach thee."

The original of this knowledge is here declared, both negatively and positively. POSITIVELY, as God is here declared the author of it. NEGATIVELY, as it is declared, that flesh and blood had not revealed it. God is the author of all knowledge and understanding whatsoever. He is the author of the knowledge that is obtained by human learning: he is the author of all moral prudence, and of the knowledge and skill that men have in their secular business. Thus it is said of all in Israel that were wise-hearted, and skilful in embroidering, that God had filled them with the spirit of wisdom, Exod. xxviii. 3.

God is the author of such knowledge; but yet not so but that FLESH and BLOOD reveals it. Mortal men are capable of imparting the knowledge of hu-

man arts and sciences, and skill in temporal affairs. God is the author of such knowledge by those means: FLESH and BLOOD is made use of by God as the mediate or second cause of it; he conveys it by the power and influence of natural means. But this spiritual knowledge, spoken of in the text, is what God is the author of, and none else: he reveals it, and FLESH and BLOOD reveals it not. He imparts this knowledge immediately, not making use of any intermediate natural causes, as he does in other knowledge.

What had passed in the preceding discourse naturally occasioned Christ to observe this; because the disciples had been telling how others did not know him, but were generally mistaken about him, and divided and confounded in their opinions of him: but Peter had declared his assured faith, that he was the Son of God. Now it was natural to observe, how it was not FLESH and BLOOD that had revealed it to him, but God: for if this knowledge were dependent on natural causes or means, how came it to pass that they, a company of poor fishermen, illiterate men, and persons of low education, attained to the knowledge of the truth; while the Scribes and Pharisees, men of vastly higher advantages, and greater knowledge and sagacity in other matters, remained in ignorance? This could be owing only to the gracious distinguishing influence and revelation of the Spirit of God. Hence, what I would make the subject of my present discourse from these words, is this

DOCTRINE.

That there is such a thing as a Spiritual and Divine Light, immediately imparted to the soul by God, of a different nature from any that is obtained by natural means.

In what I say on this subject, at this time, I would,

I. Show what this divine light is.

II. How it is given immediately by God, and not obtained by natural means.

III. Show the truth of the doctrine.

And then conclude with a brief improvement.

I. I would show what this spiritual and divine light is. And in order to it, would show,

FIRST, In a few things what it is not. And here,

1. Those convictions that natural men may have of their sin and misery, is not this spiritual and divine light. Men in a natural condition may have convictions of the guilt that lies upon them, and of the anger of God, and their danger of divine vengeance. Such convictions are from light or sensibleness of truth. That some sinners have a greater conviction of their guilt and misery than others, is because some have more light, or more of an apprehension of truth than others. And this light and conviction may be from the Spirit of God; the Spirit convinces men of sin: but yet nature is much more concerned in it than in the communication of that spiritual and divine light that is spoken of in the doctrine; it is from the Spirit of God only as assisting natural principles, and not as infusing any new principles. Common grace differs from special, in that it influences only by assisting of nature; and not by imparting grace, or bestowing any thing above nature. The light that is obtained is wholly natural, or of no superior kind to what mere nature attains to, though more of that kind be obtained than would be obtained if men were left wholly to themselves: or, in other words, common grace only assists the faculties of the soul to do that more fully which they do by nature, as natural conscience or reason will,

by mere nature, make a man sensible of guilt, and will accuse and condemn him when he has done amiss. Conscience is a principle natural to men; and the work that it doth naturally, or of itself, is to give an apprehension of right and wrong, and to suggest to the mind the relation that there is between right and wrong, and a retribution. The Spirit of God, in those convictions which unregenerate men sometimes have, assists conscience to do this work in a further degree than it would do if they were left to themselves: he helps it against those things that tend to stupify it, and obstruct its exercise. But in the renewing and sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost, those things are wrought in the soul that are above nature, and of which there is nothing of the like kind in the soul by nature; and they are caused to exist in the soul habitually, and according to such a stated constitution or law that lays such a foundation for exercises in a continued course, as is called a principle of nature. Not only are remaining principles assisted to do their work more freely and fully, but those principles are restored that were utterly destroyed by the fall; and the mind thenceforward habitually exerts those acts that the dominion of sin had made it as wholly destitute of, as a dead body is of vital acts.

The Spirit of God acts in a very different manner in the one case, from what he doth in the other. He may indeed act upon the mind of a natural man, but he acts in the mind of a saint as an indwelling vital principle. He acts upon the mind of an unregenerate person as an extrinsic, occasional agent; for in acting upon them, he doth not unite himself to them; for notwithstanding all his influences that they may be the subjects of, they are still sensual, having not the Spirit, Jude 19. But he unites himself with the mind of a saint, takes him for his temple, actuates and influences him as a new supernatural principle of life and action. There is this difference, that the Spirit of God, in acting in the soul of a godly man, exerts and communicates himself there in his own proper nature. Holiness is the proper nature of the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit operates in the minds of the godly, by uniting himself to them, and living in them, and exerting his own nature in the exercise of their faculties. The Spirit of God may act upon a creature, and yet not in acting communicate himself. The Spirit of God may act upon inanimate creatures; as, the *Spirit moved upon the face of the waters*, in the beginning of the creation; so the Spirit of God may act upon the minds of men many ways, and communicate himself no more than when he acts upon an inanimate creature. For instance, he may excite thoughts in them, may assist their natural reason and understanding, or may assist other natural principles, and this without any union with the soul, but may act, as it were, as upon an external object. But as he acts in his holy influences and spiritual operations, he acts in a way of peculiar communication of himself; so that the subject is thence denominated spiritual.

2. This spiritual and divine light does not consist in any impression made upon the imagination. It is no impression upon the mind, as though one saw any thing with the bodily eyes: it is no imagination or idea of an outward light or glory, or any beauty of form or countenance, or a visible lustre or brightness of any object. The imagination may be strongly impressed with such things; but this is not spiritual light. Indeed when the mind has a lively discovery of spiritual things, and is greatly affected by the power of divine light, it may, and probably very commonly doth, much affect the imagination; so that impressions of an outward beauty or brightness may accompany those spiritual discoveries. But spiritual light is not that impression upon the imagination, but an exceeding different thing from it. Natural men may have lively impressions on their imaginations; and we cannot determine but the devil, who

transforms himself into an angel of light, may cause imaginations of an outward beauty, or visible glory, and of sounds and speeches, and other such things; but these are things of a vastly inferior nature to spiritual light.

3. This spiritual light is not the suggesting of any new truths or propositions not contained in the word of God. This suggesting of new truths or doctrines to the mind, independent of any antecedent revelation of those propositions, either in word or writing, is inspiration; such as the prophets and apostles had, and such as some enthusiasts pretend to. But this spiritual light that I am speaking of, is quite a different thing from inspiration: it reveals no new doctrine, it suggests no new proposition to the mind, it teaches no new thing of God, or Christ, or another world, not taught in the Bible, but only gives a due apprehension of those things that are taught in the word of God.

4. It is not every affecting view that men have of the things of religion that is this spiritual and divine light. Men by mere principles of nature are capable of being affected with things that have a special relation to religion as well as other things. A person by mere nature, for instance, may be liable to be affected with the story of Jesus Christ, and the sufferings he underwent, as well as by any other tragical story: he may be the more affected with it from the interest he conceives mankind to have in it: yea, he may be affected with it without believing it; as well as a man may be affected with what he reads in a romance, or sees acted in a stage play. He may be affected with a lively and eloquent description of many pleasant things that attend the state of the blessed in heaven, as well as his imagination be entertained by a romantic description of the pleasantness of fairy land, or the like. And that common belief of the truth of the things of religion, that persons may have from education or otherwise, may help forward their affection. We read in Scripture of many that were greatly affected with things of a religious nature, who yet are there represented as wholly graceless, and many of them very ill men. A person therefore may have affecting views of the things of religion, and yet be very destitute of spiritual light. Flesh and blood may be the author of this: one man may give another an affecting view of divine things with but common assistance: but God alone can give a spiritual discovery of them.

But I proceed to show,

Secondly, Positively what this spiritual and divine light is.

And it may be thus described: a true sense of the divine excellency of the things revealed in the word of God, and a conviction of the truth and reality of them thence arising.

This spiritual light primarily consists in the former of these, viz., a real sense and apprehension of the divine excellency of things revealed in the word of God. A spiritual and saving conviction of the truth and reality of these things, arises from such a sight of their divine excellency and glory; so that this conviction of their truth is an effect and natural consequence of this sight of their divine glory. There is therefore in this spiritual light,

1. A true sense of the divine and superlative excellency of the things of religion; a real sense of the excellency of God and Jesus Christ, and of the work of redemption, and the ways and works of God revealed in the gospel. There is a divine and superlative glory in these things; an excellency that is of a vastly higher kind, and more sublime nature than in other things; a glory greatly distinguishing them from all that is earthly and temporal. He that is spiritually enlightened truly apprehends and sees it, or has a sense of it. He does not merely rationally believe that God is glorious, but he has a sense of the gloriousness of God in his heart. There is not only a rational belief that

God is holy, and that holiness is a good thing, but there is a sense of the loveliness of God's holiness. There is not only a speculatively judging that God is gracious, but a sense how amiable God is upon that account, or a sense of the beauty of this divine attribute.

There is a twofold understanding or knowledge of good that God has made the mind of man capable of. The first, that which is merely speculative and notional; as when a person only speculatively judges that any thing is, which, by the agreement of mankind, is called good or excellent, viz., that which is most to general advantage, and between which and a reward there is a suitableness, and the like. And the other is, that which consists in the sense of the heart: as when there is a sense of the beauty, amiableness, or sweetness of a thing; so that the heart is sensible of pleasure and delight in the presence of the idea of it. In the former is exercised merely the speculative faculty, or the understanding, strictly so called, or as spoken of in distinction from the will or disposition of the soul. In the latter, the will, or inclination, or heart, is mainly concerned.

Thus there is a difference between having an opinion, that God is holy and gracious, and having a sense of the loveliness and beauty of that holiness and grace. There is a difference between having a rational judgment that honey is sweet, and having a sense of its sweetness. A man may have the former, that knows not how honey tastes; but a man cannot have the latter unless he has an idea of the taste of honey in his mind. So there is a difference between believing that a person is beautiful, and having a sense of his beauty. The former may be obtained by hearsay, but the latter only by seeing the countenance. There is a wide difference between mere speculative rational judging any thing to be excellent, and having a sense of its sweetness and beauty. The former rests only in the head, speculation only is concerned in it; but the heart is concerned in the latter. When the heart is sensible of the beauty and amiableness of a thing, it necessarily feels pleasure in the apprehension. It is implied in a person's being heartily sensible of the loveliness of a thing, that the idea of it is sweet and pleasant to his soul; which is a far different thing from having a rational opinion that it is excellent.

2. There arises from this sense of divine excellency of things contained in the word of God, a conviction of the truth and reality of them; and that either directly or indirectly.

First, Indirectly, and that two ways.

1. As the prejudices that are in the heart, against the truth of divine things, are hereby removed; so that the mind becomes susceptive of the due force of rational arguments for their truth. The mind of man is naturally full of prejudices against the truth of divine things: it is full of enmity against the doctrines of the gospel; which is a disadvantage to those arguments that prove their truth, and causes them to lose their force upon the mind. But when a person has discovered to him the divine excellency of Christian doctrines, this destroys the enmity, removes those prejudices, and sanctifies the reason, and causes it to lie open to the force of arguments for their truth.

Hence was the different effect that Christ's miracles had to convince the disciples from what they had to convince the Scribes and Pharisees. Not that they had a stronger reason, or had their reason more improved; but their reason was sanctified, and those blinding prejudices, that the Scribes and Pharisees were under, were removed by the sense they had of the excellency of Christ and his doctrine.

2 It not only removes the hinderances of reason, but positively helps rea-

son. It makes even the speculative notions the more lively. It engages the attention of the mind, with the more fixedness and intenseness to that kind of objects; which causes it to have a clearer view of them, and enables it more clearly to see their mutual relations, and occasions it to take more notice of them. The ideas themselves that otherwise are dim and obscure, are by this means impressed with the greater strength, and have a light cast upon them; so that the mind can better judge of them. As he that beholds the objects on the face of the earth, when the light of the sun is cast upon them, is under greater advantage to discern them in their true forms and mutual relations, than he that sees them in a dim starlight or twilight.

The mind having a sensibleness of the excellency of divine objects, dwells upon them with delight; and the powers of the soul are more awakened and enlivened to employ themselves in the contemplation of them, and exert themselves more fully and much more to the purpose. The beauty and sweetness of the objects draws on the faculties, and draws forth their exercises: so that reason itself is under far greater advantages for its proper and free exercises, and to attain its proper end, free of darkness and delusion. But,

Secondly. A true sense of the divine excellency of the things of God's word doth more directly and immediately convince of the truth of them; and that because the excellency of these things is so superlative. There is a beauty in them that is so divine and godlike, that is greatly and evidently distinguishing of them from things merely human, or that men are the inventors and authors of; a glory that is so high and great, that when clearly seen, commands assent to their divinity and reality. When there is an actual and lively discovery of this beauty and excellency, it will not allow of any such thought as that it is a human work, or the fruit of men's invention. This evidence that they that are spiritually enlightened have of the truth of the things of religion, is a kind of intuitive and immediate evidence. They believe the doctrines of God's word to be divine, because they see divinity in them; i. e., they see a divine, and transcendent, and most evidently distinguishing glory in them; such a glory as, if clearly seen, does not leave room to doubt of their being of God, and not of men.

Such a conviction of the truth of religion as this, arising, these ways, from a sense of the divine excellency of them, is that true spiritual conviction that there is in saving faith. And this original of it, is that by which it is most essentially distinguished from that common assent, which unregenerate men are capable of.

II. I proceed now to the second thing proposed, viz., to show how this light is immediately given by God, and not obtained by natural means. And here,

1. It is not intended that the natural faculties are not made use of in it. The natural faculties are the subject of this light: and they are the subject in such a manner, that they are not merely passive, but active in it; the acts and exercises of man's understanding are concerned and made use of in it. God, in letting in this light into the soul, deals with man according to his nature, or as a rational creature; and makes use of his human faculties. But yet this light is not the less immediately from God for that; though the faculties are made use of, it is as the subject and not as the cause; and that acting of the faculties in it, is not the cause, but is either implied in the thing itself (in the light that is imparted) or is the consequence of it. As the use that we make of our eyes in beholding various objects, when the sun arises, is not the cause of the light that discovers those objects to us.

2. It is not intended that outward means have no concern in this affair. As I have observed already, it is not in this affair, as it is in inspiration, where new truths are suggested: for here is by this light only given a due apprehension of the same truths that are revealed in the word of God; and therefore it is not given without the word. The gospel is made use of in this affair: this light is the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, 2 Cor. iv. 4. The gospel is as a glass, by which this light is conveyed to us, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. Now we see through a glass.—But,

3. When it is said that this light is given immediately by God, and not obtained by natural means, hereby is intended, that it is given by God without making use of any means that operate by their own power, or a natural force. God makes use of means; but it is not as mediate causes to produce this effect. There are not truly any second causes of it; but it is produced by God immediately. The word of God is no proper cause of this effect: it does not operate by any natural force in it. The word of God is only made use of to convey to the mind the subject matter of this saving instruction: and this indeed it doth convey to us by natural force or influence. It conveys to our minds these and those doctrines; it is the cause of the notion of them in our heads, but not of the sense of the divine excellency of them in our hearts. Indeed a person cannot have spiritual light without the word. But that does not argue, that the word properly causes that light. The mind cannot see the excellency of any doctrine, unless that doctrine be first in the mind; but the seeing of the excellency of the doctrine may be immediately from the Spirit of God; though the conveying of the doctrine or proposition itself may be by the word. So that the notions that are the subject matter of this light, are conveyed to the mind by the word of God; but that due sense of the heart, wherein this light formally consists, is immediately by the Spirit of God. As for instance, that notion that there is a Christ, and that Christ is holy and gracious, is conveyed to the mind by the word of God: but the sense of the excellency of Christ by reason of that holiness and grace, is nevertheless immediately the work of the Holy Spirit.

I come now,

III. To show the truth of the doctrine; that is, to show that there is such a thing as that spiritual light that has been described, thus immediately let into the mind by God. And here I would show briefly, that this doctrine is both *scriptural* and *rational*.

First. It is scriptural. My text is not only full to the purpose, but it is a doctrine that the Scripture abounds in. We are there abundantly taught, that the saints differ from the ungodly in this, that they have the knowledge of God, and a sight of God, and of Jesus Christ. I shall mention but few texts of many. 1 John iii. 6, "Whosoever sinneth, has not seen him, nor known him." 3 John 11, "He that doth good, is of God: but he that doth evil, hath not seen God." John xiv. 19, "The world seeth me no more; but ye see me." John xvii. 3, "And this is eternal life, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." This knowledge, or sight of God and Christ, cannot be a mere speculative knowledge; because it is spoken of as a seeing and knowing, wherein they differ from the ungodly. And by these Scriptures it must not only be a different knowledge in degree and circumstances, and different in its effects; but it must be entirely different in nature and kind.

And this light and knowledge is always spoken of as immediately given of God, Matt. xi. 25, 26, 27: "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so

it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father: neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." Here this effect is ascribed alone to the arbitrary operation, and gift of God, bestowing this knowledge on whom he will, and distinguishing those with it, that have the least natural advantage or means for knowledge, even babes, when it is denied to the wise and prudent. And the imparting of the knowledge of God is here appropriated to the Son of God, as his sole prerogative. And again, 2 Cor. iv. 6, "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." This plainly shows, that there is such a thing as a discovery of the divine superlative glory and excellency of God and Christ, and that peculiar to the saints: and also, that it is as immediately from God, as light from the sun: and that it is the immediate effect of his power and will; for it is compared to God's creating the light by his powerful word in the beginning of the creation; and is said to be by the Spirit of the Lord, in the 18th verse of the preceding chapter. God is spoken of as giving the knowledge of Christ in conversion, as of what before was hidden and unseen in that. Gal. i. 15, 16, "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me." The Scripture also speaks plainly of such a knowledge of the word of God, as has been described, as the immediate gift of God, Psal. cxix. 18: "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." What could the Psalmist mean when he begged of God to open his eyes? Was he ever blind? Might he not have resort to the law and see every word and sentence in it when he pleased? And what could he mean by those wondrous things? Was it the wonderful stories of the creation, and deluge, and Israel's passing through the Red Sea, and the like? Were not his eyes open to read these strange things when he would? Doubtless by wondrous things in God's law, he had respect to those distinguishing and wonderful excellencies, and marvellous manifestations of the divine perfections, and glory, that there was in the commands and doctrines of the word, and those works and counsels of God that were there revealed. So the Scripture speaks of a knowledge of God's dispensation, and covenant of mercy, and way of grace towards his people, as peculiar to the saints, and given only by God, Psal. xxv. 14: "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant."

And that a true and saving belief of the truth of religion is that which arises from such a discovery, is also what the Scripture teaches. As John vi. 40, "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life;" where it is plain that a true faith is what arises from a spiritual sight of Christ. And John xvii. 6, 7, 8, "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me, are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me;" where Christ's manifesting God's name to the disciples, or giving them the knowledge of God, was that whereby they knew that Christ's doctrine was of God, and that Christ himself was of him, proceeded from him, and was sent by him. Again, John xii. 44, 45, 46, "Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that seeth me, seeth him that sent me. I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me, should not abide in dark-

ness." Their believing in Christ, and spiritually seeing him, are spoken of as running parallel.

Christ condemns the Jews, that they did not know that he was the Messiah, and that his doctrine was true, from an inward distinguishing taste and relish of what was divine, in Luke xii. 56, 57. He having there blamed the Jews, that though they could discern the face of the sky and of the earth, and signs of the weather, that yet they could not discern those times; or as it is expressed in Matthew, the signs of those times; he adds, yea, and why even of your own selves, judge ye not what is right? i. e., without extrinsic signs. Why have ye not that sense of true excellency, whereby ye may distinguish that which is holy and divine? Why have ye not that savor of the things of God, by which you may see the distinguishing glory, and evident divinity of me and my doctrine?

The Apostle Peter mentions it as what gave them (the apostles) good and well grounded assurance of the truth of the gospel, that they had seen the divine glory of Christ. 2 Pet. i. 16, "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty." The apostle has respect to that visible glory of Christ which they saw in his transfiguration: that glory was so divine, having such an ineffable appearance and semblance of divine holiness, majesty and grace, that it evidently denoted him to be a divine person. But if a sight of Christ's outward glory might give a rational assurance of his divinity, why may not an apprehension of his spiritual glory do so too? Doubtless Christ's spiritual glory is in itself as distinguishing, and as plainly showing his divinity, as his outward glory, and a great deal more: for his spiritual glory is that wherein his divinity consists; and the outward glory of his transfiguration showed him to be divine, only as it was a remarkable image or representation of that spiritual glory. Doubtless, therefore, he that has had a clear sight of the spiritual glory of Christ, may say, I have not followed cunningly devised fables, but have been an eyewitness of his majesty, upon as good grounds as the apostle, when he had respect to the outward glory of Christ that he had seen.

But this brings me to what was proposed next, viz., to show that,

Secondly, This doctrine is rational.

1. It is rational to suppose, that there is really such an excellency in divine things, that is so transcendent and exceedingly different from what is in other things, that, if it were seen, would most evidently distinguish them. We cannot rationally doubt but that things that are divine, that appertain to the Supreme Being, are vastly different from things that are human; that there is that godlike, high and glorious excellency in them, that does most remarkably difference them from the things that are of men; insomuch that if the difference were but seen, it would have a convincing, satisfying influence upon any one, that they are what they are, viz., divine. What reason can be offered against it? Unless we would argue, that God is not remarkably distinguished in glory from men.

If Christ should now appear to any one as he did on the mount at his tranfiguration; or if he should appear to the world in the glory that he now appears in, as he will do at the day of judgment; without doubt, the glory and majesty that he would appear in, would be such as would satisfy every one, that he was a divine person, and that religion was true: and it would be a most reasonable, and well grounded conviction too. And why may there not be that stamp of divinity, or divine glory on the word of God, on the scheme and doctrine of the gospel, that may be in like manner distinguishing and as rationally

convincing, provided it be but seen? It is rational to suppose, that when God speaks to the world, there should be something in his word or speech vastly different from man's word. Supposing that God never had spoken to the world, but we had noticed that he was about to do it; that he was about to reveal himself from heaven, and speak to us immediately himself, in divine speeches or discourses, as it were from his own mouth, or that he should give us a book of his own inditing; after what manner should we expect that he would speak? Would it not be rational to suppose, that his speech would be exceeding different from man's speech, that he should speak like a God; that is, that there should be such an excellency and sublimity in his speech or word, such a stamp of wisdom, holiness, majesty and other divine perfections, that the word of man, yea of the wisest of men, should appear mean and base in comparison of it? Doubtless it would be thought rational to expect this, and unreasonable to think otherwise. When a wise man speaks in the exercise of his wisdom, there is something in every thing he says, that is very distinguishable from the talk of a little child. So, without doubt, and much more, is the speech of God (if there be any such thing as the speech of God) to be distinguished from that of the wisest of men; agreeably to Jer. xxiii. 28, 29. God having there been reproving the false prophets that prophesied in his name, and pretended that what they spake was his word, when indeed it was their own word, says, "The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully: what is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord. Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?"

2. If there be such a distinguishing excellency in divine things; it is rational to suppose that there may be such a thing as seeing it. What should hinder but that it may be seen? It is no argument, that there is no such thing as such a distinguishing excellency, or that, if there be, that it cannot be seen, that some do not see it, though they may be discerning men in temporal matters. It is not rational to suppose, if there be any such excellency in divine things, that wicked men should see it. It is not rational to suppose, that those whose minds are full of spiritual pollution, and under the power of filthy lusts, should have any relish or sense of divine beauty or excellency; or that their minds should be susceptive of that light that is in its own nature so pure and heavenly. It need not seem at all strange, that sin should so blind the mind, seeing that men's particular natural tempers and dispositions will so much blind them in secular matters; as when men's natural temper is melancholy, jealous, fearful, proud, or the like.

3. It is rational to suppose, that this knowledge should be given immediately by God, and not be obtained by natural means. Upon what account should it seem unreasonable, that there should be any immediate communication between God and the creature? It is strange that men should make any matter of difficulty of it. Why should not he that made all things, still have something immediately to do with the things that he has made? Where lies the great difficulty, if we own the being of a God, and that he created all things out of nothing, of allowing some immediate influence of God on the creation still? And if it be reasonable to suppose it with respect to any part of the creation, it is especially so with respect to reasonable, intelligent creatures; who are next to God in the gradation of the different orders of beings, and whose business is most immediately with God; who were made on purpose for those exercises that do respect God and wherein they have nextly to do with God: for reason teaches, that man was made to serve and glorify his Creator. And

if it be rational to suppose that God immediately communicates himself to man in any affair, it is in this. It is rational to suppose that God would reserve that knowledge and wisdom, that is of such a divine and excellent nature, to be bestowed immediately by himself, and that it should not be left in the power of second causes. Spiritual wisdom and grace is the highest and most excellent gift that ever God bestows on any creature: in this the highest excellency and perfection of a rational creature consists. It is also immensely the most important of all divine gifts: it is that wherein man's happiness consists, and on which his everlasting welfare depends. How rational is it to suppose that God, however he has left meaner goods and lower gifts to second causes, and in some sort in their power, yet should reserve this most excellent, divine, and important of all divine communications, in his own hands, to be bestowed immediately by himself, as a thing too great for second causes to be concerned in! It is rational to suppose, that this blessing should be immediately from God; for there is no gift or benefit that is in itself so nearly related to the divine nature, there is nothing the creature receives that is so much of God, of his nature, so much a participation of the deity: it is a kind of emanation of God's beauty, and is related to God as the light is to the sun. It is therefore congruous and fit, that when it is given of God, it should be nextly from himself, and by himself, according to his own sovereign will.

It is rational to suppose, that it should be beyond a man's power to obtain this knowledge and light by the mere strength of natural reason; for it is not a thing that belongs to reason, to see the beauty and loveliness of spiritual things; it is not a speculative thing, but depends on the sense of the heart. Reason indeed is necessary in order to it, as it is by reason only that we are become the subjects of the means of it; which means I have already shown to be necessary in order to it, though they have no proper causal in the affair. It is by reason that we become possessed of a notion of those doctrines that are the subject matter of this divine light; and reason may many ways be indirectly and remotely an advantage to it. And reason has also to do in the acts that are immediately consequent on this discovery: a seeing the truth of religion from hence, is by reason; though it be but by one step, and the inference be immediate. So reason has to do in that accepting of, and trusting in Christ, that is consequent on it. But if we take reason strictly, not for the faculty of mental perception in general, but for ratiocination, or a power of inferring by arguments; I say, if we take reason thus, the perceiving of spiritual beauty and excellency no more belongs to reason, than it belongs to the sense of feeling to perceive colors, or to the power of seeing to perceive the sweetness of food. It is out of reason's province to perceive the beauty or loveliness of any thing: such a perception does not belong to that faculty. Reason's work is to perceive truth and not excellency. It is not ratiocination that gives men the perception of the beauty and amiableness of a countenance, though it may be many ways indirectly an advantage to it; yet it is no more reason that immediately perceives it, than it is reason that perceives the sweetness of honey: it depends on the sense of the heart. Reason may determine that a countenance is beautiful to others, it may determine that honey is sweet to others; but it will never give me a perception of its sweetness.

I will conclude with a very brief improvement of what has been said.

First. This doctrine may lead us to reflect on the goodness of God, that has so ordered it, that a saving evidence of the truth of the gospel is such, as is attainable by persons of mean capacities and advantages, as well as those that are of the greatest parts and learning. If the evidence of the gospel depended

only on history, and such reasonings as learned men only are capable of, it would be above the reach of far the greatest part of mankind. But persons with but an ordinary degree of knowledge, are capable, without a long and subtile train of reasoning, to see the divine excellency of the things of religion: they are capable of being taught by the Spirit of God, as well as learned men. The evidence that is this way obtained, is vastly better and more satisfying, than all that can be obtained by the arguings of those that are most learned, and greatest masters of reason. And babes are as capable of knowing these things, as the wise and prudent; and they are often hid from these when they are revealed to those. 1 Cor. i. 26, 27, "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men, after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world."

Secondly. This doctrine may well put us upon examining ourselves, whether we have ever had this divine light, that has been described, let into our souls. If there be such a thing indeed, and it be not only a notion or whimsy of persons of weak and distempered brains, then doubtless it is a thing of great importance, whether we have thus been taught by the Spirit of God; whether the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, hath shined unto us, giving us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; whether we have seen the Son, and believed on him, or have that faith of gospel doctrines that arises from a spiritual sight of Christ.

Thirdly. All may hence be exhorted earnestly to seek this spiritual light. To influence and move to it, the following things may be considered.

1. This is the most excellent and divine wisdom that any creature is capable of. It is more excellent than any human learning; it is far more excellent than all the knowledge of the greatest philosophers or statesmen. Yea, the least glimpse of the glory of God in the face of Christ doth more exalt and ennoble the soul, than all the knowledge of those that have the greatest speculative understanding in divinity without grace. This knowledge has the most noble object that is or can be, viz., the divine glory or excellency of God and Christ. The knowledge of these objects is that wherein consists the most excellent knowledge of the angels, yea, of God himself.

2. This knowledge is that which is above all others sweet and joyful. Men have a great deal of pleasure in human knowledge, in studies of natural things; but this is nothing to that joy which arises from this divine light shining into the soul. This light gives a view of those things that are immensely the most exquisitely beautiful, and capable of delighting the eye of the understanding. This spiritual light is the dawning of the light of glory in the heart. There is nothing so powerful as this to support persons in affliction, and to give the mind peace and brightness in this stormy and dark world.

3. This light is such as effectually influences the inclination, and changes the nature of the soul. It assimilates the nature to the divine nature, and changes the soul into an image of the same glory that is beheld. 2 Cor. iii. 18, "But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." This knowledge will wean from the world, and raise the inclination to heavenly things. It will turn the heart to God as the fountain of good, and to choose him for the only portion. This light, and this only, will bring the soul to a saving close with Christ. It conforms the heart to the gospel, mortifies its enmity and opposition against the scheme of salvation therein revealed: it causes the heart to embrace the joyful tidings, and entirely to adhere to, and acquiesce in the revelation of Christ as our Saviour: it causes the whole soul to

accord and symphonize with it, admitting it with entire credit and respect, cleaving to it with full inclination and affection; and it effectually disposes the soul to give up itself entirely to Christ.

4. This light, and this only, has its fruit in a universal holiness of life. No merely notional or speculative understanding of the doctrines of religion will ever bring to this. But this light, as it reaches the bottom of the heart, and changes the nature, so it will effectually dispose to a universal obedience. It shows God's worthiness to be obeyed and served. It draws forth the heart in a sincere love to God, which is the only principle of a true, gracious, and universal obedience; and it convinces of the reality of those glorious rewards that God has promised to them that obey him.

SERMON XXVIII.

TRUE GRACE DISTINGUISHED FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF DEVILS.

JAMES ii. 19.—Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well; the devils also believe and tremble.

OBSERVE in these words—1. Something that some depend on, as an evidence of their good estate, and acceptance, as the objects of God's favor, viz., a speculative faith, or belief of the doctrines of religion. The great doctrine of the existence of one only God is particularly mentioned; probably because this was a doctrine wherein especially there was a visible and noted distinction between professing Christians and the heathens, amongst whom the Christians, in those days, were dispersed: and therefore this was what many trusted in, as what recommended them to, or at least was an evidence of, their interest in the great spiritual and eternal privileges, in which real Christians were distinguished from the rest of the world.

2. How much is allowed concerning this faith, viz., that it is a good attainment; "Thou doest well." It was good as it was necessary. This doctrine was one of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity; and, in some respects, above all others, fundamental. It was necessary to be believed, in order to salvation: and a being without the belief of this doctrine, especially in those that had such advantage to know, as they had, whom the apostle wrote to, would be a great sin, and what would vastly aggravate their damnation. This belief was also good, as it had a good tendency in many respects.

3. What is implicitly denied concerning it, viz., that it is any evidence of a person's being in a state of salvation. The whole context shows this to be the design of the apostle in the words: and it is particularly manifest by the conclusion of the verse; which is,

4. The thing observable in the words, viz., the argument by which the apostle proves, that this is no sign of a state of grace, viz., that it is found in the devils. They believe that there is one God, and that he is a holy, sin-hating God; and that he is a God of truth, and will fulfil his threatenings, by which he has denounced future judgments, and a great increase of misery on them; and that he is an Almighty God, and able to execute his threatened vengeance upon them.

Therefore the DOCTRINE I infer from the words, to make the subject of my present discourse, is this:

Nothing in the mind of man, that is of the same nature with what the devils experience, or are the subjects of, is any sure sign of saving grace.

If there be any thing that the devils have, or find in themselves, which is an evidence of the saving grace of the Spirit of God, then the apostle's argument is not good; which is plainly this: that which is in the devils, or which they do, is no certain evidence of grace. But the devils believe that there is one God. Therefore, thy believing that there is one God, is no sure evidence that thou art gracious. So that the whole foundation of the apostle's argument, lies in that proposition; that which is in the devils, is no certain sign of grace.

Nevertheless, I shall mention two or three further reasons, or arguments, of the truth of this doctrine.

I The devils have no degree of holiness; and therefore those things which

are nothing beyond what they are the subjects of, cannot be holy experiences.

The devil once was holy; but when he fell he lost all his holiness, and became perfectly wicked. He is the greatest sinner, and, in some sense, the father of all sin. John viii. 44, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth; because there was no truth in him: when he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it." 1 John iii. 8, "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning." He is spoken of as, by way of eminence, "THE WICKED ONE." So Matt. xiii. 19, "Then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart." Verse 38, "The tares are the children of the wicked one." 1 John ii. 13, "I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one." Chap. iii. 12, "Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one." Chap. v. 18, "Whosoever is born of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." So the devils are called evil spirits, unclean spirits, powers of darkness, rulers of the darkness of the world, and wickedness itself. Eph. vi. 12, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood; but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

Therefore, surely, those things which the minds of devils are the subjects of, can have nothing of the nature of true holiness in them. The knowledge, and understanding which they have of the things of God and religion, cannot be of the nature of divine and holy light, nor any knowledge that is merely of the same kind. No such impressions as are made on their hearts can be of a spiritual nature. That kind of sense which they have of divine things, however great, cannot be a holy sense. Such affections as move their hearts, however powerful, cannot be holy affections. If there be no holiness in them, as they are in the devil, there can be no holiness in them as they are in man; unless something be added to them beyond what is in them, or they are in the devil. And if any thing be added to them, then they are not the same things; but are something beyond what devils are the subjects of; which is contrary to the supposition; for the proposition which I am upon, is, that those things which are of the same nature, and nothing beyond what devils are the subjects of, cannot be holy experiences. It is not the subject that makes the affection or experience, or quality, holy; but it is the quality that makes the subject holy.

And if those qualities and experiences which the devils are the subjects of, have nothing of the nature of holiness in them, then they can be no certain signs that persons who have them are holy or gracious. There is no certain sign of true grace, but those things which are spiritual and gracious. It is God's image, that is, his seal and mark, the stamp by which those that are his are known. But that which has nothing of the nature of holiness, has nothing of this image. That which is a sure sign of grace, must either be something which has the nature and essence of grace, or is flowing from, or some way belonging to its essence. For that which distinguishes things one from another, is their essence, or something appertaining to their essence; and therefore, that which is sometimes found wholly without the essence of holiness or grace, can be no essential, sure, or distinguishing mark of grace.

II. The devils are not only absolutely without all true holiness, but they are not so much as the subjects of any common grace.

If any should imagine that some things may be signs of grace which are not grace itself, or which have nothing of the nature and essence of grace and holi-

ness in them; yet, certainly, they will allow that the qualifications, which are sure evidences of grace, must be things, that are near akin to grace, or having some remarkable affinity with it. But the devils are not only wholly destitute of any true holiness; but they are at the greatest distance from it, and have nothing in them in any wise akin to it.

There are many in this world, who are wholly destitute of saving grace, who yet have common grace. They have no true holiness, but, nevertheless, have something of that which is called *moral virtue;* and are the subjects of some degree of the common influences of the Spirit of God. It is so with those in general, that live under the light of the gospel, and are not given up to judicial blindness, and hardness. Yea, those that are thus given up, yet have some degree of restraining grace while they live in this world; without which, the earth could not bear them, and they would in no measure be tolerable members of human society. But when any are damned, or cast into hell, as the devils are, God wholly withdraws his restraining grace, and all merciful influences of his Spirit whatsoever, and they have neither saving grace nor common grace; neither the grace of the Spirit, nor any of the common gifts of the Spirit; neither true holiness, nor moral virtue of any kind. Hence arises the vast increase of the exercise of wickedness in the hearts of men, when they are damned. And herein is the chief difference between the damned in hell, and unregenerate and graceless men in this world. Not that wicked men in this world have any more holiness or true virtue than the damned, or that wicked men, when they leave this world, have any principles of wickedness infused into them; but when men are cast into hell, God perfectly takes away his Spirit from them, as to all its merciful, common influences, and entirely withdraws from them all restraints of his Spirit and good providence.

III. It is unreasonable to suppose, that a person's being in any respect as the devil is, should be a certain sign that he is very unlike and opposite to him; and, hereafter, shall not have his part with him. True saints are extremely unlike and contrary to the devil, both relatively and really. They are so relatively. The devil is the grand rebel; the chief enemy of God and Christ; the object of God's greatest wrath; a condemned malefactor, utterly rejected and cast off by him; forever shut out of his presence; the prisoner of his justice; an everlasting inhabitant of the infernal world. The saints, on the contrary, are the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem; members of the family of the glorious King of heaven; the children of God; the brethren and spouse of his dear Son; heirs of God; joint heirs with Christ; kings and priests unto God. And they are extremely different really. The devil, on account of his hateful nature, and those accursed dispositions which reign in him, is called Satan; the adversary; Abaddon and Apollyon; the great destroyer; the wolf; the roaring lion; the great dragon; the old serpent. The saints are represented as God's holy ones; his anointed ones; the excellent of the earth; the meek of the earth; lambs and doves; Christ's little children; having the image of God, pure in heart; God's jewels; lilies in Christ's garden; plants of paradise; stars of heaven; temples of the LIVING GOD. The saints, so far as they are saints, are as diverse from the devil, as heaven is from hell; and much more contrary than light is to darkness; and the eternal state that they are appointed to, is answerably diverse and contrary.

Now it is not reasonable to suppose, that a being in any respect as Satan is, or the being the subject of any of the same properties, qualifications, affections or actions, that are in him, is any certain evidence that persons are thus exceeding different from him; and in circumstances so diverse, and appointed

to an eternal state, so extremely contrary in all respects. Wicked men are in Scripture called "children of the devil." Now is it reasonable to suppose, that men's being in any respect as the devil is, can be a certain sign that they are not his children, but the children of the infinitely holy and blessed God? We are informed, that wicked men shall, hereafter, have their part with devils; shall be sentenced to the same everlasting fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels. Now, can a man's being like the devil in any respect, be a sure token that he shall not have his part with him, but with glorious angels, and with Jesus Christ, dwelling with him where he is, that he may behold and partake of his glory?

IMPROVEMENT.

The first use may lie in several inferences, for our instruction.

I. From what has been said, it may be inferred, by parity of reason, that nothing that damned men do, or ever will experience, can be any sure sign of grace.

Damned men are like the devils; are conformed to them in nature and state. They have nothing better in them than the devils; have no higher principles in their hearts; experience nothing, and do nothing of a more excellent kind: as they are the children and servants of the devil, and as such shall dwell with him, and be partakers with him, of the same misery. As Christ says, concerning the saints in their future state, Matt. xxii. 30, that "they shall be as the angels of God in heaven;" so it may be said concerning ungodly men, in their future state; that they shall be as the fallen, wicked angels in hell.

Each of the forementioned reasons, given to show the truth of the doctrine, with respect to devils, holds good with respect to damned men. Damned men have no degree of holiness; and therefore, those things which are nothing beyond what they have, cannot be holy experiences. So it is true that the damned men are not only absolutely destitute of all true holiness, but they have not so much as any common grace. And lastly, it is unreasonable to suppose, that a person's being in any respect as the damned in hell are, should be a certain sign that they are very unlike and opposite to them, and hereafter shall not have their portion with them.

II. We may hence infer, that no degree of speculative knowledge of things of religion, is any certain sign of saving grace. The devil, before his fall, was among those bright and glorious angels of heaven, which are represented as morning stars, and flames of fire, that excel in strength and wisdom. And though he be now become sinful, yet his sin has not abolished the faculties of the angelic nature; as when man fell, he did not lose the faculties of the human nature. Sin destroys spiritual principles, but not the natural faculties. It is true, sin, when in full dominion, entirely prevents the exercise of the natural faculties, in holy and spiritual understanding; and lays many impediments in the way of their proper exercise in other respects: it lays the natural faculty of reason, under great disadvantages, by the many and strong prejudices which the mind is brought under the power of: and in fallen men, the faculties of the soul are doubtless greatly impeded in their exercise, through that great weakness and disorder of the corporeal organ, which it is strictly united to; which is the consequence of sin. But there seems to be nothing in the nature of sin or moral corruption, that has any tendency to destroy the natural capacity, or even to diminish it, properly speaking. If sin were of such a nature, as necessarily to have that tendency and effect, then it might be expected that wicked men, in a future state, where they are given up entirely to the un-

restrained exercise of their corruptions and lusts, and sin is, in all respects, brought to its greatest perfection in them, would have the capacity of their souls greatly diminished: which we have no reason to suppose; but rather on the contrary, that their capacities are greatly enlarged, and that their actual knowledge is vastly increased; and that even with respect to the Divine Being, and the things of religion, and the great concerns of the immortal souls of men; and that with regard to these things, the eyes of wicked men are opened; and they, in some respects, emerge out of darkness into clear light, when they go into another world.

The greatness of the abilities of the devils, may be argued from the representation in Eph. vi. 12, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against pincipalities, against powers," &c. The same may also be argued from what the Scripture says of Satan's subtilty, Gen. iii. 1, 2 Cor. xi. 3, Acts xiii. 10.

And as the devil has a faculty of understanding of large capacity, so he is capable of great speculative knowledge, of the things of God, and the invisible and eternal world, as well as other things; and must needs actually have a great understanding of these things; as these are the things which have always been chiefly in his view; and as his circumstances from his first existence, have been such as have tended chiefly to engage him to attend to these things. Before his fall he was one of those angels who continually beheld the face of the Father, which is in heaven. And sin has no tendency to destroy the memory; and therefore has no tendency to blot out of it any speculative knowledge that was formerly there.

As the devil's subtilty shows his great capacity, so the way in which his subtilty is exercised and manifested, which is principally in his artful management, with respect to things of religion; his exceeding subtle representations, insinuations, reasonings, and temptations, concerning these things, demonstrates his great actual understanding of them. As in order to the being a very artful disputant in any science, though it be only to confound and deceive such as are conversant in the science, a person had need to have a great and extensive acquaintance with the things which pertain to that science.

Thus the devil has, undoubtedly, a great degree of speculative knowledge in divinity; having been, as it were, educated in the best divinity school in the universe, viz., the heaven of heavens. He must needs have such an extensive and accurate knowledge concerning the nature and attributes of God, as we, worms of the dust, in our present state, are not capable of. And he must have a far more extensive knowledge of the works of God, as of the work of creation in particular; for he was a spectator of the creation of this visible world; he was one of those morning stars that we read of, Job xxxviii. 4, 5, 6, 7, who sang together, and of those sons of God that shouted for joy, when God laid the foundations of the earth, and laid the measures thereof, and stretched the line upon it. And so he must have a very great knowledge of God's works of providence: he has been a spectator of the series of these works from the beginning: he has seen how God has governed the world in all ages: he has seen the whole train of God's wonderful successive dispensations of providence towards his church, from generation to generation. And he has not been an indifferent spectator; but the great opposition which there has been between God and him, in the whole course of those dispensations, has necessarily greatly engaged his attention in the strictest observation of them. He must have a great degree of knowledge concerning Jesus Christ as the Saviour of men, and the nature and method of the work of redemption, and the wonderful wisdom of God in this contrivance. It is that work of God wherein, above all

others, God has acted in opposition to him, and in which he has chiefly set himself in opposition to God. It is with relation to this affair, that that mighty warfare has been maintained, which has been carried on between Michael and his angels, and the devil and his angels, through all ages from the beginning of the world, and especially since Christ appeared in the world. The devil has had enough to engage his attention to the steps of divine wisdom in this work; for it is to that wisdom he has opposed his subtilty; and he has seen and found, to his great disappointment, and unspeakable torment, how divine wisdom, as exercised in that work, has baffled and confounded his devices. He has a great knowledge of the things of another world; for the things of that world are in his immediate view. He has a great knowledge of heaven; for he has been an inhabitant of that world of glory; and he has a great knowledge of hell, and the nature of its misery; for he is the first inhabitant of hell; and above all the other inhabitants, has experience of its torments, and has felt them constantly, for more than fifty-seven hundred years. He must have a great knowledge of the holy Scriptures; for it is evident he is not hindered from knowing what is written there, by the use he made of the words of Scripture in his temptation of our Saviour. And if he can know, he has much opportunity to know, and must needs have a disposition to know, with the greatest exactness; that he may, to greater effect, pervert and wrest the Scripture, and prevent such an effect of the word of God on the hearts of men, as shall tend to overthrow his kingdom. He must have a great knowledge of the nature of mankind; their capacity; their dispositions, and the corruptions of their hearts: for he has had long and great observation and experience. The heart of man is what he had chiefly to do with in his subtle devices, mighty efforts, restless and indefatigable operations and exertions of himself from the beginning of the world.—And it is evident that he has a great speculative knowledge of the nature of experimental religion, by his being able to imitate it so artfully, and in such a manner, as to transform himself into an angel of light.

Therefore it is manifest, from my text and doctrine, that no degree of speculative knowledge of things of religion, is any certain sign of true piety. Whatever clear notions a man may have of the attributes of God, and doctrines of the Trinity; the nature of the two covenants; the economy of the persons of the Trinity, and the part which each person has in the affair of man's redemption; if he can discourse never so excellently of the offices of Christ, and the way of salvation by him, and the admirable methods of divine wisdom, and the harmony of the various attributes of God in that way; if he can talk never so clearly and exactly of the method of the justification of a sinner, and of the nature of conversion, and the operations of the Spirit of God in applying the redemption of Christ; giving good distinctions; happily solving difficulties, and answering objections, in a manner tending greatly to the enlightening of the ignorant; to the edification of the church of God, and the conviction of gainsayers, and the great increase of light in the world; if he has more knowledge of this sort than hundreds of true saints of an ordinary education, and most divines, yet all is no certain evidence of any degree of saving grace in the heart.

It is true, the Scripture often speaks of knowledge of divine things, as what is peculiar to true saints; as in John xvii. 3, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Matt. xi. 27, "No man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." Psalm ix 10, "They that know thy name, will put their trust in thee." Philip. iii. 8, "I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ

Jesus my Lord." But then we must understand it of a different kind of knowledge, from that speculative understanding which the devil has to so great a degree. It will also be allowed, that the spiritual, saving knowledge of God and divine things greatly promotes speculative knowledge, as it engages the mind in its search into things of this kind, and much assists to a distinct understanding of them, so that, other things being equal, they that have spiritual knowledge, are much more likely than others to have a good doctrinal acquaintance with things of religion, but yet such acquaintance may be no distinguishing characteristic of true saints.

III. It may also be inferred from what has been observed, that for persons merely to yield a speculative assent to the doctrines of religion as true, is no certain evidence of a state of grace. My text tells us, that the devils believe, and as they believe that there is one God, so they believe the truth of the doctrines of religion in general. The devil is orthodox in his faith; he believes the true scheme of doctrine; he is no Deist, Socinian, Arian, Pelagian, or Antinomian; the articles of his faith are all sound, and what he is thoroughly established in.

Therefore for a person to believe the doctrines of Christianity, merely from the influence of things speculative, or from the force of arguments, as discerned only by speculation, is no evidence of grace.

Though it is probably a very rare thing for unregenerate men to have a strong persuasion of the truth of the doctrines of religion, especially such of them as are very mysterious, and much above the comprehension of reason: yea, it is manifest, that we have no warrant to determine, that it can never be so, or to look upon such a persuasion, as an infallible evidence of grace; and that no person can safely determine his state to be good from such an evidence. Yet if he, not only himself, seems to be very confident of the truth of Christianity and its doctrines, but is able to argue most strongly for the proof of them; yet in this he goes nothing beyond the devil, who, doubtless, has a great knowledge of the rational arguments, by which the truth of the Christian religion, and its several principles are evinced.

And, therefore, when the Scripture speaks of *believing that Jesus is the Son of God*, as a sure evidence of grace, as in 1 John v. 1, and other places, it must be understood, not of a mere speculative assent, but of another kind and manner of believing, which is called the faith of God's elect, Titus i. 1. There is a spiritual conviction of the truth, which is a believing with the whole heart, peculiar to true saints, of which I would speak particularly by and by.

IV. It may be inferred from the doctrine which has been insisted on, that it is no certain sign, that persons are savingly converted—that they have been subjects of very great distress and terrors of mind, through apprehensions of God's wrath, and fears of damnation.

That the devils are the subjects of great terrors through apprehensions of God's wrath, and fears of future effects of it, is implied in my text, which speaks not only of their believing, but trembling. It must be no small degree of terror, which should make those principalities and powers, those mighty, proud and sturdy beings to tremble.

There are many terrors, that some persons, who are concerned for their salvation, are the subjects of, which are not from any proper awakenings of conscience, or apprehensions of truth, but from melancholy, or frightful impressions on their imagination, or some groundless apprehensions, and the delusions, and false suggestions of Satan. But if they have had never so great and long continued terrors, from real awakenings and convictions of truth, and views of

things as they are; this is no more than what is in the devils, and will be in all wicked men in another world. However stupid and senseless most ungodly men are now, all will be effectually awakened at last: there will be no such thing as slumbering in hell. There are many that cannot be awakened by the most solemn warnings and awful threatenings of the word of God, the most alarming discourses from the pulpit, and the most awakening and awful providences; but all will be thoroughly awakened by the sound of the last trumpet, and the appearance of Christ to judgment, and all sorts will then be filled with most amazing terrors, from apprehensions of truth, and seeing things as they be; when "the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men (such as were the most lofty and stout-hearted, most ready to treat the things of religion with contempt), shall hide themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains; and say to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?" Rev. vi. 15, 16, 17.

Therefore, if persons have first been awakened, and then afterwards have had comfort and joy, it is no certain sign that their comforts are of the right kind, that they were preceded by very great terrors.

V. It may be further inferred from the doctrine, that no work of the law on men's hearts, in conviction of guilt and just desert of punishment, is a sure argument that a person has been savingly converted.

Not only are no awakenings and terrors any certain evidence of this, but no mere legal work whatsoever, though carried to the utmost extent that it can be; nothing wherein there is no grace or spiritual light, but only the mere conviction of natural conscience, and those acts and operations of the mind which are the result of this; and so are, as it were, merely forced by the clear light of conscience, without the concurrence of the heart and inclination with that light. I say, these things are no certain sign of the saving grace of God, or that a person was ever savingly converted.

The evidence of this, from my text and doctrine, is demonstrative; because the devils are the subjects of these things; and all wicked men that shall finally perish, will be the subjects of the same. Natural conscience is not extinguished in the damned in hell; but, on the contrary, remains, and is there in its greatest strength, and is brought to its most perfect exercise; most fully to do its proper office as God's vicegerent in the soul, to condemn those rebels against the King of heaven and earth, and manifest God's just wrath and vengeance, and by that means to torment them, and be as a never-dying worm within them. Wretched men find means in this world to blind the eyes and stop the mouth of this vicegerent of a sin-revenging God; but they shall not be able to do it always. In another world, the eyes and mouth of conscience will be fully opened. God will hereafter make wicked men to see and know these things which now they industriously hide their eyes from. Isa. xxvi. 10, 11, "Let favor be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness. In the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord. Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see. But they shall see, and be ashamed for their envy at the people, yea, the fire of thine enemies shall devour them." We have this expression often annexed to God's threatenings of wrath to his enemies: "And they shall know that I am the Lord." This shall be accomplished by their woful experience, and clear light in their consciences, whereby they shall be made to know, whether they will or not, how great and terrible, holy and righteous a God JEHOVAH is, whose authority they have despised; and

they shall know that he is righteous and holy in their destruction. This all the ungodly will be convinced of at the day of judgment, by the bringing to light all their wickedness of heart and practice, and setting all their sins with all their aggravations, in order, not only in the view of others, even of the whole world, but in the view of their own consciences. This is threatened, Psalm l. 21, "These things thou hast done, and I kept silence. Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself. But I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes." Compare this with the four first verses of the psalm. The end of the day of judgment is not to find out what is just, as it is with human judgments, but it is to manifest what is just; to make known God's justice in the judgment which he will execute, to men's own consciences, and to the world. And therefore that day is called "the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God," Rom. ii. 5. Now sinners often cavil against the justice of God's dispensations, and particularly the justice of the punishment which God threatens for their sins, excusing themselves, and condemning God. But when God comes to manifest their wickedness in the light of that day, and to call them to an account, they will be speechless. Matt. xxii. 11, 12, "And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment. And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? and he was speechless." When the King of heaven and earth comes to judgment, their consciences will be so perfectly enlightened and convinced by the all-searching light they shall then stand in, that their mouths will be effectually stopped, as to all excuses for themselves, all pleading of their own righteousness to excuse or justify them, and all objections against the justice of their judge, that their conscience will condemn them only, and not God.

Therefore it follows from the doctrine, that it can be no certain sign of grace, that persons have had great convictions of sin—have had their sins of life, with their aggravations, remarkably set before them, so as greatly to affect and terrify them; and withal, have had a great sight of the wickedness of their hearts, and been convinced of the greatness of the sin of unbelief, and of the inexcusableness and heinousness of their most secret spiritual iniquities; and have been brought to be convinced of the utter insufficiency of their own righteousness, and to despair of being recommended to God by it; have been as much brought off from their own righteousness, as ever any are under a mere legal humiliation; have been convinced that they are wholly without excuse before God, and deserve damnation, and that God would be just in executing the threatened punishment upon them, though it be so dreadful. All these things will be in all the ungodly at the day of judgment, when they shall stand with devils, at the left hand, and shall be doomed, as accursed, to everlasting fire with them.

Indeed there will be no submission in them. Their conscience will be freely convinced that God is just in their condemnation, but yet their wills will not be bowed to God's justice. There will be no acquiescence of mind in that divine attribute—no yielding of the soul to God's sovereignty, but the highest degree of enmity and opposition. A true submission of the heart and will to the justice and sovereignty of God, is therefore allowed to be something peculiar to true converts, being something which the devils and damned souls are and ever will be far from; and which a mere work of the law, and convictions of conscience, however great and clear, will never bring men to.

When sinners are the subjects of great convictions of conscience, and a remarkable work of the law, it is only a transacting the business of the day of judgment in the conscience beforehand. God sits enthroned in the conscience,

as at the last day he will sit enthroned in the clouds of heaven; the sinner is arraigned, as it were, at God's bar, and God appears in his awful greatness, as a just and holy, sin-hating, and sin-revenging God, as he will then. The sinner's iniquities are brought to light—his sins set in order before him—the hidden things of darkness, and the counsels of the heart are made manifest—as it will be then. Many witnesses do, as it were, rise up against the sinner under convictions of conscience, as they will against the wicked at the day of judgment. And the books are opened, particularly the book of God's strict and holy law, is opened in the conscience, and its rules applied for the condemnation of the sinner; which is the book that will be opened at the day of judgment, as the grand rule of judgment, to all such wicked men as have lived under it. And the sentence of the law is pronounced against the sinner, and the justice of the sentence made manifest, as it will be at the day of judgment. The conviction of a sinner at the day of judgment, will be a work of the law, as well as the conviction of conscience in this world; and the work of the law (if the work be merely legal) be sure, is never carried further in the consciences of sinners now, than it will be at that day, when its work will be perfect, in thoroughly stopping the sinner's mouth. Rom. iii. 19, "Now we know, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." Every mouth shall be stopped by the law, either now or hereafter, and all the world shall become sensibly guilty before God—guilty of death—deserving of damnation. And, therefore, if sinners have been the subjects of a great work of the law, and have thus become guilty, and their mouths have been stopped; it is no certain sign that ever they have been converted.

Indeed, the want of a thorough sense of guilt, and desert of punishment, and conviction of the justice of God, in threatening damnation, is a good negative sign; it is a sign that a person never was converted, and truly brought, with the whole soul, to embrace Christ, as a Saviour from this punishment. For it is easily demonstrable, that there is no such thing as entirely and cordially accepting an offer from God, of a Saviour from a punishment that he threatens, which we think we do not deserve. But the having such a conviction is no certain sign, that persons have true faith, or have ever truly received Christ as their Saviour. And if persons have great comfort, joy and confidence, suddenly let into their minds, after great convictions, of such a kind as has been mentioned, it is no infallible evidence that their comforts are built on a good foundation.

It is manifest therefore, that too much stress has been laid by many persons on a great work of the law, preceding their comforts; who seem not only to have looked on such a work of the law, as necessary to precede faith, but also to have esteemed it as the chief evidence of the truth and genuineness of succeeding faith and comforts. By this means, it is to be feared very many have been deceived, and established in a false hope. And what is to be seen in the event of things, in multitudes of instances, confirms this. It may be safely allowed, not to be so unusual for great convictions of conscience to prove abortive, and fail of a good issue, as for less convictions; and that more generally, when the Spirit of God proceeds so far with sinners, in the work of the law, as to give them a great sight of their hearts, and of the heinousness of their spiritual iniquities, and to convince them that they are without excuse, and that all their righteousness can do nothing to merit God's favors, but that they lie justly exposed to God's eternal vengeance without mercy, a work of saving conversion follows.—But we have no warrant to say, it is universally so, or to lay it down as an infallible rule, that when convictions of conscience have gone thus

far, saving faith and repentance will surely follow. If any should think they have ground for such a determination, because they cannot conceive what end God should have in carrying on a work of conviction to such a length, and so preparing the heart for faith, and, after all, never giving saving faith to the soul; I desire it may be considered, where will be the end of our doubts and difficulties, if we think ourselves sufficient to determine so positively and particularly concerning God's ends and designs in what he does. It may be asked such an objector, what is God's end in giving a sinner any degree of the strivings of his Spirit, and conviction of conscience, when he afterwards suffers it to come to nothing, and to prove in vain? If he may give some degree that may finally be in vain, who shall set the bounds, and say how great the degree shall be? Who can, on sure grounds, determine, that when a sinner has so much of that conviction, which the devils and damned in hell have, true faith and eternal salvation will be the certain consequence? This we may certainly determine, that, if the apostle's argument in the text be good, not any thing whatsoever, that the devils have, is certainly connected with such a consequence. Seeing sinners, while such, are capable of the most perfect convictions, and will have them at the day of judgment, and in hell; who shall say, that God never shall cause reprobates to anticipate the future judgment and damnation in that respect? And if he does so, who shall say to him, What doest thou? or call him to account concerning his ends in so doing? Not but that many possible wise ends might be thought of, and mentioned if it were needful, or I had now room for it.—The Spirit of God is often quenched by the exercise of the wickedness of men's hearts, after he has gone far in a work of conviction; so that their convictions never have a good issue. And who can say that sinners, by the exercise of their opposition and enmity against God, (which is not at all mortified by the greatest legal convictions, neither in the damned in hell, nor sinners on earth,) may not provoke God to take his Spirit from them, even after he has proceeded the greatest length in a work of conviction? Who can say, that God never is provoked to destroy some, after he has brought them, as it were, through the wilderness even to the edge of the land of rest? As he slew some of the Israelites, even in the plains of Moab.

And let it be considered, where is our warrant in Scripture, to make use of any legal convictions, or any method or order of successive events in a work of the law, and consequent comforts, as a sure sign of regeneration? The Scripture is abundant, in expressly mentioning evidences of grace, and of a state of favor with God, as characteristics of the true saints: but where do we ever find such things as these amongst those evidences? Or where do we find any other signs insisted on, besides grace itself, its nature, exercises, and fruits? These were the evidences that Job relied upon: these were the things that the Psalmist every where insists upon, as evidences of his sincerity, and particularly in the cxixth Psalm, from the beginning to the end: these were the signs that Hezekiah trusted to in his sickness.

These were the characteristics given of those that are truly happy, by our Saviour, in the beginning of his sermon on the mount: these are the things that Christ mentions, as the true evidences of being his real disciples, in his last and dying discourse to his disciples, in the xivth, xvth, and xviith chapters of John, and in his intercessory prayer, chap. xvii:—these are the things which the Apostle Paul often speaks of as evidences of his sincerity, and sure title to a crown of glory: and these are the things he often mentions to others, in his epistles, as the proper evidences of real Christianity, a justified state, and a title to glory. He insists on the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness,

goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, as the proper evidences or being Christ's, and living in the Spirit, Gal. v. 22—25. It is that charity, or divine love, which is pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy, &c., that he insists on, as the most essential evidence of true godliness; without which, all other things are nothing. Such are the signs which the apostle James insists on, as the proper evidence of a truly wise and good man: James iii. 17, "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." And such are the signs of true Christianity, which the Apostle John insists on throughout his epistles. And we never have anywhere in the Bible, from the beginning to the end of it, any other signs of godliness given than such as these. If persons have such things as these apparently in them, it ought to be determined that they are truly converted, without its being insisted that it be first known what steps or method the Spirit of God took to introduce these things into the soul, which oftentimes is altogether untraceable. All the works of God are, in some respects, unsearchable: but the Scripture often represents the works of the Spirit of God as peculiarly so. Isa. xl. 13, "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor, hath taught him?" Eccl. xi. 5, "As thou knowest not what is the way of the Spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child; so thou knowest not the works of God, who maketh all." John iii. 8, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

VI. It follows from my text and doctrine, that it is no certain sign of grace, that persons have earnest desires and longings after salvation.

The devils, doubtless, long for deliverance from the misery they suffer, and from that greater misery which they expect. If they tremble through fear of it, they must, necessarily, earnestly desire to be delivered from it. Wicked men are, in Scripture, represented as longing for the privileges of the righteous, when the door is shut, and they are shut out from among them; they come to the door, and cry, Lord, Lord, open to us. Therefore we are not to look on all desires, or all desires that are very earnest and vehement, as certain evidences of a pious heart. There are earnest desires of a religious nature, which the saints have, that are the proper breathings of a new nature, and distinguishing qualities of true saints. But there are also longings which unregenerate men may have, which are often mistaken for marks of godliness. They think they hunger and thirst after righteousness, and have earnest desires after God and Christ, and long for heaven; when indeed, all is to be resolved into desires of salvation from self-love; and so is a longing which arises from no higher principles than the earnest desires of devils.

VII. It may be inferred from what has been observed, that persons who have no grace may have a great apprehension of an external glory in things heavenly and divine, and of whatsoever is external pertaining to things of religion.

If persons have impressed strongly on their minds ideas of that sort which are obtained by the external senses, whether they are of that kind that enter by the ear, as any kind of sound; whether it be the most pleasant music, or words spoken of excellent signification; words of Scripture, or any other, immediately suggested, as though they were spoken, though they seem to be never so suitable to their case, or adapted to the subject of their meditations. Or whether they are of that kind that are obtained by the eye, as ideas of a visible beauty and glory, a shining light, and external glory of heaven, golden

streets, walls and gates of precious stones, splendid palaces, glorious inhabitants shining forth as the sun, a most magnificent throne surrounded by angels and saints in shining ranks; or any thing external, belonging to Jesus Christ, either in his humble state, as of Jesus hanging on the cross, with his crown of thorns, his wounds open, and blood trickling down; or in his glorified state, with awful majesty, or ravishing beauty and sweetness in his countenance, his face shining above the brightness of the sun, and the like: these things are no certain signs of grace.

Multitudes that are now in hell, will have ideas of the external glory that pertains to things heavenly, far beyond whatever any have in this world. They will see all that external glory and beauty, in which Christ will appear at the day of judgment, when the sun shall be turned into darkness before him; which, doubtless, will be ten thousand times greater than ever was impressed on the imagination of either saints or sinners in this present state, or ever was conceived by any mortal man.

VIII. It may be inferred from the doctrine, that persons who have no grace may have a very great and affecting sense of many divine things on their hearts.

The devil has not only great speculative knowledge, but he has a sense of many divine things, which deeply affects him, and is most strongly impressed on his heart. As,

1. The devils and damned souls have a great sense of the vast importance of the things of another world. They are in the invisible world, and they see and know how great the things of that world are: their experience teaches them in the most affecting manner. They have a great sense of the worth of salvation, and the worth of immortal souls, and the vast importance of those things that concern men's eternal welfare. The parable in the latter end of the xvith chapter of Luke, teaches this, in representing the rich man in hell, as entreating that Lazarus might be sent to his five brothers, to testify unto them, lest they should come to that place of torment. They who endure the torments of hell have doubtless a most lively and affecting sense of the vastness of an endless eternity, and of the comparative momentariness of this life, and the vanity of the concerns and enjoyments of time. They are convinced effectually, that all the things of this world, even those that appear greatest and most important to the inhabitants of the earth, are despicable trifles, in comparison of the things of the eternal world. They have a great sense of the preciousness of time, and of the means of grace, and the inestimable value of the privileges which they enjoy who live under the gospel. They are fully sensible of the folly of those that go on in sin; neglect their opportunities; make light of the counsels and warnings of God; and bitterly lament their exceeding folly in their own sins, by which they have brought on themselves so great and remediless misery. When sinners, by woful experience, know the dreadful issue of their evil way, they will mourn at the last, saying, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof, and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me! Prov. v. 11—13.

Therefore, however true godliness is now attended with a great sense of the importance of divine things, and it is rare that men that have no grace do maintain such a sense in any steady and persevering manner; yet it is manifest those things are no certain evidences of grace. Unregenerate men may have a sense of the importance of the things of eternity, and the vanity of the things of time; the worth of immortal souls; the preciousness of time and means of grace, and the folly of the way of allowed sin: and may have such a sense of those things,

as may deeply affect them, and cause them to mourn for their own sins, and be much concerned for others; though it be true, they have not these things in the same manner, and in all respects from the same principles and views as godly men have them.

2. Devils and damned men have a strong and most affecting sense of the awful greatness and majesty of God. The awful majesty of God is greatly made manifest in the execution of divine wrath, which they are the subjects of. The making this known, is one thing God has in design in his vengeance on his enemies: Rom. ix. 22, "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?" The devils tremble before this great and terrible God, and under a strong sense of his awful majesty. It is greatly manifested to them, and damned souls now; but shall be manifested in a further degree, in that day, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, in flaming fire, to take vengeance upon them; and when they shall earnestly desire to fly, and be hid from the face of him that sits on the throne ("which shall be, because of the glory of his majesty," Isa. ii. 10), and when they shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. When Christ comes at the last day in the glory of his Father, every eye shall see him in that glory (in this respect, that they shall see his terrible majesty), and they also that pierced him, Rev. i. 7. Both those devils, and wicked men, which tormented and insulted him when he appeared in meanness and ignominy, shall then see him in the glory of his Father.

It is evident, therefore, that a sense of God's terrible majesty is no certain evidence of saving grace; for we see that wicked men and devils are capable of it; yea, many wicked men in this world have actually had it. This is a manifestation which God made of himself, in the sight of that wicked congregation of Mount Sinai, which they saw, and were deeply affected with, so that all the people that were in the camp trembled.

3. Devils and damned men have some kind of conviction and sense of all the attributes of God, both natural and moral, that is strong and very affecting.

The devils know God's almighty power; they saw great manifestation of it, when they saw God lay the foundation of the earth, &c., and were much affected with it; and they have seen innumerable other great demonstrations of his power; as in the universal deluge, the destruction of Sodom, the wonders in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness; the causing the sun to stand still in Joshua's time, and many others. And they had a very affecting manifestation of God's mighty power on themselves, in casting all their hosts down from heaven into hell; and have continual affecting experience of it, in God's reserving them in strong chains of darkness, and in the strong pains they feel, and will hereafter have far more affecting experience of it, when they shall be punished from the glory of God's power, with that mighty destruction which they now tremble in expectation of. So the devils have a great knowledge of the wisdom of God: they have had unspeakably more opportunity and occasion to observe it in the work of creation, and also in the works of providence, than any mortal man has ever had; and have been themselves the subjects of innumerable affecting manifestations of it, in God's disappointing and confounding them in their most subtle devices, in so wonderful and amazing a manner. So they see and find the infinite purity and holiness of the divine nature in the most affecting manner, as this appears in his infinite hatred of sin, in what they feel of the dreadful effects of that hatred. They know already by what they suffer, and will know hereafter to a greater degree, and far more affecting manner, that such is the

opposition of God's nature to sin, that it is like a consuming fire, that burns with infinite vehemence against it; they will feel the vehement heat of that fire in a very dreadful manner. They also will see the holiness of God, as exercised in his love to righteousness and holiness, in what they will see of the reward of the righteousness of Christ, and the holiness of his people, in the glory of Christ and his church; which also will be very affecting to devils and wicked men. And the exact justice of God will be manifested to them in the clearest and strongest, most convincing and most affecting light, at the day of judgment; when they will also see great and affecting demonstrations of the riches of his grace, in the marvellous fruits of his love to the vessels of mercy; when they shall see them at the right hand of Christ shining as the sun in the kingdom of their Father, and shall hear the blessed sentence pronounced upon them; and will be deeply affected with it, as seems naturally implied in Luke xiii. 28, 29. The devils know God's truth, and therefore they believe his threatenings, and tremble in expectation of their accomplishment. And wicked men that now doubt his truth, and dare not trust his word, will hereafter, in the most convincing, affecting manner, find his word to be true in all that he has threatened, and will see that he is faithful to his promises in the rewards of his saints. Devils and damned men know that God is eternal and unchangeable; and therefore they despair of there ever being an end to their misery.

Therefore it is manifest, that merely persons' having an affecting sense of some, or even of all God's attributes, is no certain sign that they have the true grace of God in their hearts.

Object. Here possibly some may object against the force of the foregoing reasoning, that ungodly men in this world are in exceeding different circumstances from those which the devils are in, and from those which wicked men will be in, at the day of judgment; those things which are visible and present to these, are now future and invisible to the other; and wicked men in this world are in the body, that clogs and hinders the soul, and are encompassed with objects that blind and stupify them: and therefore it does not follow, that because the wicked in another world have a great apprehension and lively sense of such and such things without grace, that ungodly men in their present state may have the same.

Ans. To this I answer, it is not supposed that ever men in this life have all those things which have been mentioned, to the same degree that the devils and damned have them. None supposes that ever any in this life have terrors of conscience to an equal degree with them. It is not to be supposed that any mortal man, whether godly or ungodly, has an equal degree of speculative knowledge with the devil. And, as was just now observed, the wicked, at the day of judgment, will have a vastly greater idea of the external glory of Christ than ever any have in the present state. So, doubtless, they will have a far greater sense of God's awful greatness and terrible majesty, than any could subsist under in this frail state. So we may well conclude, that the devils and wicked men in hell have a greater and more affecting sense of the vastness of eternity, and (in some respects) a greater sense of the importance of the things of another world, than any here have, and they have also longings after salvation to a higher degree than any wicked men in this world.

But yet it is evident, that men in this world may have things of the same kind with devils and damned men. The same sort of light in the understanding, the same views, and the same affections—the same sense of things—the same kind of impressions on the mind, and on the heart. If the objection is against the conclusiveness of the reasoning that has been made use of to prove this, it

is against the conclusiveness of that reasoning which is the apostle's more properly than mine. The apostle judged it a conclusive argument against such as thought their believing there was one God, an evidence of their being gracious, that the devils believed the same. So the argument is exactly the same against such as think they have grace, because they believe God is a holy God, or because they have a sense of the awful majesty of God. The same may be observed of other things that have been mentioned. My text has reference not only to the act of the understanding of devils in believing, but to that affection of their hearts, which accompanies the views they have; as trembling is an effect of the affection of the heart; which shows, that if men have both the same views of understanding, and also the same affections of heart, that the devils have, it is no sign of grace.

And as to the particular degree, to which these things may be carried in men, in this world, without grace, it appears not to be safe to go about so to ascertain and fix it, as to make use of it as an infallible rule to determine men's state. I know not where we have any rule to go by to fix the precise degree, in which God, by his providence, or his common influences on the mind, will excite in wicked men in this world, the same views and affections which the wicked have in another world; which, it is manifest, the former are capable of as well as the latter, having the same faculties and principles of soul, and which views and affections, it is evident, they often are actually the subjects of in some degree—some in a greater, and some in a less degree. The infallible evidences of grace, which are laid down in Scripture, are of another kind; they are all of a holy and spiritual nature, and therefore things of that kind which a heart that is wholly carnal and corrupt, cannot receive, or have any experience of, 1 Cor. ii. 14.

I might also here add, that observation and experience, in very many instances, seem to confirm what Scripture and reason teach in these things.

The second USE may be of self-examination.

Let the things which have been observed put all on examining themselves, and inquiring whether they have any better evidences of saving grace, than such as have been mentioned.

We see how the infallible Spirit of God in the text plainly represents the things the devils are subjects of, as no sure sign of grace. And we have now, in some instances, observed how far the devils and damned men go, and will go, in their experience—their knowledge of divine things—their belief of truth—their awakenings and terrors of conscience—their conviction of guilt, and of the justice of God, in their eternal, dreadful damnation—their longings after salvation—their sight of the external glory of Christ, and heavenly things—their sense of the vast importance of the things of religion, and another world—their sense of the awful greatness and terrible majesty of God, yea, of all God's attributes. These things may well put us on serious self-examination, whether we have any thing to evidence our good estate, beyond what the devils are the subjects of. Christ said to his disciples, "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." So the Spirit of Christ, in his apostle James, does in effect say, in my text, except what you experience in your souls go beyond the experiences of devils, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of God.

Here, it may be, some will be ready to say, I have something besides all these things, which have been mentioned; I have things which the devils have not, even love and joy.

I answer, you may have something besides the experiences of devils, and

yet nothing beyond them. Though the experience be different, yet it may not be owing to any different principle, but only the different circumstances, under which these principles are exercised. The principles, from whence the forementioned things in devils and damned men do arise, are these two; natural understanding and self-love. It is from natural understanding or reason that they have such a degree of knowledge in divine things and such a belief of them. It is from these principles of natural understanding and self-love, as exercised about their own dispositions and actions, and God as their judge, that they have natural conscience, and have such convictions of conscience as have been spoken of. It is from these principles that they have such a sense of the importance of the things of religion and the eternal world, and such longings after salvation. It is from the joint exercise of these two principles that they are so sensible of the awful majesty of God, and of all the attributes of the divine nature, and so greatly affected with them: and it is from these principles, joined with external sense, the wicked, at the day of judgment, will have so great an apprehension of, and will be so greatly affected by, the external glory of Christ and his saints. And that you have a kind of love, or gratitude and joy, which devils and damned men have not, may possibly not arise from any other principles in your heart different from these two, but only from these principles, as exercised in different circumstances.

As for instance, your being a subject of the restraining grace of God, and being under circumstances of hope, and the receipt of mercy. The natural understanding and self-love of devils possibly might affect them in the same manner, if they were in the same circumstances. If your love to God has its first source from nothing else than a supposed immediate divine witness, or any other supposed evidence, that Christ died for you in particular, and that God loves you, it springs from no higher principle than self-love, which is a principle that reigns in the hearts of devils. Self-love is sufficient, without grace, to cause men to love those that love them, or that they imagine love them, and make much of them: Luke vi. 32, "For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? For sinners also love those that love them." And would not the hearts of devils be filled with great joy, if they, by any means should take up a confident persuasion that God had pardoned them, and was become their friend, and that they should be delivered from that wrath which they now are in trembling expectation of? If the devils go so far as you have heard, even in their circumstances, being totally cast off, and given up to unrestrained wickedness, being without hope, knowing that God is and ever will be their enemy, they suffering his wrath without mercy; how far may we reasonably suppose they might go, in imitation of grace and pious experience, if they had the same degree of knowledge, as clear views, and as strong conviction, under circumstances of hope, and offers of mercy; and being the subjects of common grace, restraining their corruptions, and assisting and exciting the natural principles of reason, conscience, &c.? Such things as devils are the subjects of; such great conviction of conscience; such a sense of the importance of eternal things; such affecting views of the awful majesty, greatness, power, holiness, justice, and truth of God, and such a sense of his great grace to the saints, if they, or any thing like them, should be in the heart of a sinner, in this world, at the same time that he, from some strong impression on his imagination of Christ appearing to him, or sweet words spoken to him, or by some other means, has suddenly, after great terrors, imbibed a strong confidence, that now this great God is his friend and father, has released him from all the misery he feared, and has promised him eternal happiness; I say, such things would, doubtless, vastly

heighten his ecstasy of joy, and raise the exercise of natural gratitude (that principle from whence sinners love those that love them), and would occasion a great imitation of many graces in strong exercises. Is it any wonder then, that multitudes under such a sort of affection are deceived? Especially when they have devils to help forward the delusion, whose great subtilty has chiefly been exercised in deceiving mankind, through all past generations.

Inquiry. Here possibly some may be ready to inquire, If there may be so many things which men may experience from no higher principles than are in the minds and hearts of devils; what are those exercises and affections, that are of a higher nature, which I must find in my heart, and which I may justly look upon as sure signs of the saving grace of God's Spirit?

Ans. I answer; those exercises and affections which are good evidences of grace, differ from all that the devils are the subjects of, and all that can arise from such principles as are in their hearts, in two things, viz., their foundation and their tendency.

1. They differ in their foundation, or in that belonging to them, which is most fundamental in them, and the foundation of all the rest which pertains to them, viz., an apprehension or sense of the supreme holy beauty and comeliness of divine things, as they are in themselves, or in their own nature.

This the devils and damned in hell are, and forever will be entirely destitute of; this the devils once had, while they stood in their integrity; but this they wholly lost when they fell: and this is the only thing that can be mentioned, pertaining to the devil's apprehension and sense of the Divine Being, that he did lose. Nothing else belonging to the knowledge of God, can be devised, that he is destitute of. It has been observed, that there is no one attribute of the divine nature, but what he is sensible of, and knows, and has a strong and very affecting conviction of; and this, I think, is evident and undeniable. But the supreme beauty of the divine nature he is altogether blind to: he sees no more of it than a man born perfectly blind does of colors. The great sight he has of the attributes of God gives him an idea, and strong sense of his awful majesty, but no idea of his beauty and comeliness. Though he has seen so much of God's wonderful works of power, wisdom, holiness, justice, and truth, and his wonderful works of grace to mankind, this so many thousand years, and has had occasion to observe them with the strongest attention; yet all serves not to give him the least sense of his divine beauty. And though the devils should continue to exercise their mighty powers of mind with the strongest intention; and should take things in all possible views, in every order and arrangement, yet they never will see this. So little akin is the knowledge they have to this, that the great degrees of that knowledge bring them no nearer to it. Yet the more knowledge they have of God, of that kind, the more do they hate God. That wherein the beauty of the divine nature does most essentially consist, viz., his holiness or moral excellency, appears in their eyes, furthest from beauty: it is on that very account, chiefly, that he appears hateful to them. The more holiness they see in him, the more hateful he appears: the greater their sight is of his holiness, the higher is their hatred of him raised. And because of their hatred of his holiness, they hate him the more, the more they see of his other attributes. They would hate a holy being whatever his other attributes were, but they hate such a holy being the worse for his being infinitely wise, and infinitely powerful, &c., more than they would do, if they saw in him less power and less wisdom.

The wicked at the day of judgment, will see every thing else in Christ but his beauty and amiableness. There is no one quality or property of his person

that can be thought of, but what will be set before them in the strongest light at that day, but only such as consist in this. They will see him coming in the clouds of heaven in power and great glory; in the glory of his Father. They will have that view of his external glory which is vastly beyond what we can have any imagination of: and they will have the strongest and most convincing demonstrations of all his attributes and perfections. They will have a sense of his great majesty, that will be, as it were, infinitely affecting to them. They shall be made to know effectually that he is the Lord. They shall see what he is, and what he does; his nature and works shall appear in the strongest view. But his holy and infinite beauty and amiableness, which is all in all, and without which every other quality and property is nothing, and worse than nothing, they will see nothing of.

Therefore, it is a sight or sense of this that is the thing wherein does fundamentally consist the difference between those things in which the saving grace of God's Spirit consists, and the experience of devils and damned souls. This is the foundation of every thing else that is distinguishing in true Christian experience. This is the foundation of the faith of excellency of the things exhibited in the gospel, or sense of the divine beauty and amiableness of the scheme of doctrine there exhibited, that savingly convinces the mind that it is indeed divine, or of God. This account of the matter is plainly implied, 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4: "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." And v. 6, "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." It is very evident that a saving belief of the gospel is here spoken of by the apostle, as arising from a view of the divine glory or beauty of the things it exhibits. It is by this view that the soul of a true convert is enabled, savingly, to see the sufficiency of Christ for his salvation. He that has his eyes open to behold the divine superlative beauty and loveliness of Jesus Christ, is convinced of his sufficiency to stand as a mediator between him, a guilty, hell-deserving wretch, and an infinitely holy God, in an exceeding different manner than ever he can be convinced by all the arguments that are made use of by the most excellent authors or preachers.

When he once comes to see Christ's divine loveliness, he wonders no more that he is thought worthy by God the Father to be accepted for the vilest sinner. Now it is not difficult for him to conceive how the blood of Christ should be esteemed, by God, so precious, as to be worthy to be accepted as a compensation for the greatest sins. The soul now properly sees the preciousness of Christ, and so does properly see and understand the very ground and reason of his acceptableness to God, and the value God sets on his blood, obedience, and intercession. This satisfies the poor guilty soul, and gives it rest; when the finest and most elaborate discourses about the sufficiency of Christ, and suitableness of the way of salvation, would not do it. When a man then comes to see the proper foundation of faith and affiance with his own eyes, then he believes savingly. "He that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, hath everlasting life," John vi. 40. When Christ thus manifests God's name to men, then "they believe that all things, whatsoever God has given to Christ, are of him, and believe that Christ was sent of God," John xvii. 6, 7, 8. And "they that thus know Christ's name will trust in him," Psalm ix. 10. In order to true faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God is revealed in men, Gal. i. 15, 16. And it is this sight of the divine beauty of Christ that bows the wills and draws the hearts of

men. A sight of the greatness of God, in his attributes, may overwhelm men, and be more than they can endure; but the enmity and opposition of the heart may remain in its full strength, and the will remain inflexible, whereas one glimpse of the moral and spiritual glory of God, and supreme amiableness of Jesus Christ, shining into the heart, overcomes and abolishes this opposition, and inclines the soul to Christ, as it were, by an omnipotent power; so that now, not only the understanding, but the will, and the whole soul, receives and embraces the Saviour. This is most certainly the discovery, which is the first internal foundation of a saving faith in Christ, in the soul of the true convert; and not on having of it immediately suggested and revealed to the soul by a text of Scripture, or any immediate outward or inward witness, that Christ loves him, or that he died for him in particular, and is his Saviour; so begetting confidence and joy, and a seeming love to Christ because he loves him; by which sort of faith and conversion (demonstratively vain and counterfeit) multitudes have been deluded. The sight of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ, works true supreme love to God. This is a sight of the proper foundation of supreme love to God, viz., the supreme loveliness of his nature; and a love to him on this ground is truly above any thing that can come from a mere principle of self-love, which is in the hearts of devils as well as men. And this begets true spiritual and holy joy in the soul, which is indeed joy in God, and glorying in him, and not rejoicing in ourselves.

This sight of the beauty of divine things will excite true desires and longings of soul after those things; not like the longings of devils, or any such forced desires, as those of a man in great danger of death, after some bitter medicine that he hopes will save his life; but natural, free desires, the desires of appetite—the thirstings of a new nature, as a newborn babe desires the mother's breast, and as a hungry man longs for some pleasant food he thinks of—or, as the thirsty hart pants after the cool and clear stream.

This sense of divine beauty is the first thing in the actual change made in the soul in true conversion, and is the foundation of every thing else belonging to that change, as is evident by those words of the apostle, 2 Cor. iii. 18, "But we all, with open face, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

2. Truly gracious affections and exercises of mind differ from such as are counterfeit, which arise from no higher principles than are in the hearts of devils in their tendency, and that in these two respects.

(1.) They are of a tendency and influence very contrary to that which was especially the devil's sin, even pride. That pride was, in a peculiar manner, the devil's sin, is manifest from 1 Tim. iii. 6: "Not a novice, lest, being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil." False and delusive experiences evermore tend to this, though oftentimes under the disguise of great and extraordinary humility. Spiritual pride is the prevailing temper and general character of hypocrites, deluded with false discoveries and affections.—They are in general, of a disposition directly contrary to those two things belonging to the Christian temper, directed to by the apostle; the one in Rom. xii. 16, "Be not wise in your own conceit;" and the other in Phil. ii. 3, "Let each esteem others better than themselves."—False experience is conceited of itself, and affected with itself. Thus he that has false humility is much affected to think how he is abased before God. He that has false love is affected, when he thinks of the greatness of his love. The very food and nourishment of false experience is to view itself, and take much notice of itself; and its very

breath and life is to talk much of itself, or some way to be showing itself. Whereas truly gracious views and affections are of a quite contrary tendency; they nourish no self-conceit—no exalting conceit of the man's own righteousness, experience, or privileges—no high conceit of his humiliations. They incline to no ostentation, nor self-exaltation, under any disguise whatsoever; but that sense of the supreme, holy beauty and glory of God and Christ, which is the foundation of them, and that only mortifies pride, and truly humbles the soul. It not only cuts off some of the outermost branches (causing many branches to grow out where but one was before) but it strikes at the very root of pride—it alters the very nature and disposition of the heart. The light of God's beauty, and that alone, truly shows the soul its own deformity, and effectually inclines it to exalt God and abase itself.

(2.) These gracious exercises and affections differ from the other in their tendency to destroy Satan's interest. 1. In the person himself, in their tendency to cause the soul to hate every evil and false way, and to produce universal holiness of heart and life, disposing him to make the service of God, and the promoting of his glory and the good of mankind, the very business of his life; whereas those false discoveries and affections have not this effect. There may, indeed, be great zeal, and a great deal of what is called religion; but it is not a truly Christian zeal—it is not a being zealous of good works; their religion is not the service of God—it is not a seeking and serving God, but, indeed, a seeking and serving themselves.—Though there may be a change of life, it is not a change from every wicked way to a uniform Christian life and practice, but only a turning the stream of corruption from one channel to another. Thus the apostle James distinguishes, in our context, a true faith from the faith of devils: James ii. 19, 20, "Thou believest that there is one God; the devils also believe and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?" And thus the Apostle John distinguishes true communion with God: 1 John i. 6, 7, "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth; but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin." By this he distinguishes true spiritual knowledge, chap. ii. 3, 4: "Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." And hereby the same apostle distinguishes true love, chap. iii. 18, 19: "Let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed [in work, as the word signifies] and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him."

2. Truly gracious experiences have a tendency to destroy Satan's interest in the world.

False religion, consisting in the counterfeits of the operation of the Spirit of God, and in high pretences and great appearances of inward experimental religion: when this prevails among a people, though, for the present, it may surprise many, and may be the occasion of alarming and awakening some sinners, yet in the final issue of things, tends greatly to wound and weaken the cause of vital religion, and to strengthen the interest of Satan, desperately to harden the hearts of sinners, exceedingly to fill the world with prejudice against the power of godliness, to promote infidelity and licentious principles and practices, to build up and make strong the devil's kingdom in the world, more than open vice and profaneness, or professed Atheism, or public persecution, and perhaps more than any thing else whatsoever.

But it is not so with true religion in its genuine beauty. That, if it prevails

in great power, will doubtless excite the rage of the devil, and many other enemies of religion;—however, it gives great advantage to its friends, and exceedingly strengthens their cause, and tends to convince or confound enemies. True religion is a divine light in the souls of the saints; and, as it shines out in the conversation before men, it tends to induce others to glorify God. There is nothing like it (as to means) to awaken the consciences of men, to convince infidels, and to stop the mouths of gainsayers. Though men naturally hate the power of godliness, yet when they see the fruits of it, there is a witness in their consciences in its favor. "He that serveth Christ in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, is acceptable to God, and approved of men," Rom. xiv. 17, 18. The prevailing of true religion ever tends to the honor of religion in the world, though it commonly is the occasion of great persecution. It is a sure thing; the more it appears and is exemplified in the view of the world, the more will its honor, and the honor of its author, be advanced. Phil. i. 11, "Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."

The third use may be of exhortation, to seek those distinguishing qualifications and affections of soul which neither the devil, nor any unholy being, has or can have.

How excellent is that inward virtue and religion which consists in those! Herein consists the most excellent experiences of saints and angels in heaven. Herein consists the best experience of the man Christ Jesus, whether in his humbled or glorified state. Herein consists the image of God; yea, this is spoken of in Scripture, as a communication of something of God's own beauty and excellency.—A participation of the divine nature, 2 Peter i. 4. A partaking of his holiness, Heb. xii. 10. A partaking of Christ's fulness, John i. 16. Hereby the saints are filled with all the fulness of God, Eph. iii. 18, 19. Hereby they have fellowship with both the Father and the Son, 1 John i. 3; that is, they communicate with them in their happiness. Yea, by means of this divine virtue, there is a mutual indwelling of God and the saints: 1 John iv. 16, "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him."

This qualification must render the person that has it excellent and happy indeed, and doubtless is the highest dignity and blessedness of any creature. This is the peculiar gift of God, which he bestows only on his special favorites. As to silver, gold, and diamonds, earthly crowns and kingdoms, he often throws them out to those that he esteems as dogs and swine; but this is the peculiar blessing of his dear children. This is what flesh and blood cannot impart, and what all the devils in hell cannot work the least degree of, in any heart; it is God alone can bestow it. This was the special benefit which Christ died to procure for his elect, the most excellent token of his everlasting love; the chief fruit of his great labors, and the most precious purchase of his blood.

By this, above all other things, do men glorify God. By this, above all other things, do the saints shine as lights in the world, and are blessings to mankind. And this, above all things, tends to their own comfort; from hence arises that "peace which passeth all understanding," and that "joy which is unspeakable, and full of glory." And this is that which will most certainly issue in the eternal salvation of those that have it. It is impossible that the soul wherein it is should sink and perish. It is an immortal seed—it is eternal life begun; and therefore they that have it can never die. It is the dawning of the light of glory—it is the day star risen in the heart, that is a sure forerunner of that sun's rising which will bring on an everlasting day. This is that water which Christ

gives, which is in him that drinks it "a well of water springing up into everlasting life," John iv. 14. It is something from heaven, is of a heavenly nature, and tends to heaven. And those that have it, however they may now wander in a wilderness, or be tossed to and fro on a tempestuous ocean, shall certainly arrive in heaven at last, where this heavenly spark shall be increased and perfected, and the souls of the saints all be transformed into a bright and pure flame, and they shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father AMEN.

SERMON XXIX.

HYPOCRITES DEFICIENT IN THE DUTY OF PRAYER.

Job xxvii. 10.—Will he always call upon God?

Concerning these words, I would observe,

1. Who it is that is here spoken of, viz., the hypocrite; as you may see, if you take the two preceding verses with the verse of the text. "For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul? Will God hear his cry when trouble cometh upon him? Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God?" Job's three friends, in their speeches to him, insisted much upon it, that he was a hypocrite. But Job, in this chapter, asserts his sincerity and integrity, and shows how different his own behavior had been from that of hypocrites. Particularly he declares his steadfast and immovable resolution of persevering and holding out in the ways of religion and righteousness to the end; as you may see in the six first verses. In the text, he shows how contrary to this steadfastness and perseverance the character of the hypocrite is, who is not wont thus to hold out in religion.

2. We may observe what duty of religion it is, with respect to which the hypocrite is deciphered in the text, and that is the duty of *prayer*, or calling upon God.

3. Here is something supposed of the hypocrite relating to this duty, viz., that he may continue in it *for a while;* he may call upon God for a season.

4. Something asserted, viz., that it is not the manner of hypocrites to continue *always* in this duty. *Will he always call upon God?* It is in the form of an interrogation; but the words have the force of a strong negation, or of an assertion, that however the hypocrite may call upon God for a season, yet he will not always continue in it.

DOCTRINE.

However hypocrites may continue for a season in the duty of prayer, yet it is their manner, after a while, in a great measure, to leave it off.

In speaking upon this doctrine, I shall show,

I. How hypocrites often continue for a season to call upon God.

II. How it is their manner, after a while, in a great measure to leave off the practice of this duty.

III. Give some reasons why this is the manner of hypocrites.

I. I would show how hypocrites often continue for a season in the duty of prayer.

1. They do so for a while after they have received common illuminations and affections. While they are under awakenings, they may, through fear of hell, call upon God, and attend very constantly upon the duty of secret prayer. And after they have had some melting affections, having their hearts much moved with the goodness of God, or with some affecting encouragements, and false joy and comfort; while these impressions last they continue to call upon God in the duty of secret prayer.

2. After they have obtained a hope, and have made profession of their good estate, they often continue for a while in the duty of secret prayer. For a while they are affected with their hope: they think that God hath delivered them out of a natural condition, and given them an interest in Christ, thus introducing them into a state of safety from that eternal misery which they lately feared. With this supposed kindness of God to them, they are much affected, and often find in themselves for a while a kind of love to God, excited by his supposed love to them. Now while this affection towards God continues, the duties of religion seem pleasant to them; it is even with some delight that they approach to God in their closets; and for the present, it may be, they think of no other than continuing to call upon God as long as they live.

Yea, they may continue in the duty of secret prayer for a while after the liveliness of their affections is past, partly through the influence of their former intentions: they intended to continue seeking God always; and now suddenly to leave off, would therefore be too shocking to their own minds; and partly through the force of their own preconceived notions, and what they have always believed, viz., that godly persons do continue in religion, and that their goodness is not like the morning cloud. Therefore, though they have no love to the duty of prayer, and begin to grow weary of it, yet as they love their own hope, they are somewhat backward to take a course, which will prove it to be a false hope, and so deprive them of it.

If they should at once carry themselves so as they have always been taught is a sign of a false hope, they would scare themselves. Their hope is dear to them, and it would scare them to see any plain evidence that it is not true. Hence, for a considerable time after the force of their illuminations and affections is over, and after they hate the duty of prayer, and would be glad to have done with it, if they could, without showing themselves to be hypocrites; they hold up a kind of attendance upon the duty of secret prayer. This may keep up the outside of religion in them for a good while, and occasion it to be somewhat slowly that they are brought to neglect it. They must not leave off suddenly, because that would be too great a shock to their false peace. But they must come gradually to it, as they find their consciences can bear it, and as they can find out devices and salvos to cover over the matter, and make their doing so consistent, in their own opinion, with the truth of their hope. But,

II. It is the manner of hypocrites, after a while, in a great measure to leave off the practice of this duty. We are often taught, that the seeming goodness and piety of hypocrites is not of a lasting and persevering nature. It is so with respect to their practice of the duty of prayer in particular, and especially of secret prayer. They can omit this duty, and their omission of it not be taken notice of by others, who know what profession they have made. So that a regard to their own reputation doth not oblige them still to practise it. If others saw how they neglect it, it would exceedingly shock their charity towards them. But their neglect doth not fall under their observation; at least not under the observation of many. Therefore they may omit this duty, and still have the credit of being converted persons.

Men of this character can come to a neglect of secret prayer by degrees without very much shocking their peace. For though indeed for a converted person to live in a great measure without secret prayer, is very wide of the notion they once had of a true convert; yet they find means by degrees to alter their notions, and to bring their principles to suit with their inclinations; and at length they come to that, in their notions of things, that a man may be a

convert, and yet live very much in neglect of this duty. In time, they can bring all things to suit well together, a hope of heaven, and an indulgence of sloth in gratifying carnal appetites, and living in a great measure a prayerless life. They cannot indeed suddenly make these things agree; it must be a work of time; and length of time will effect it. By degrees they find out ways to guard and defend their consciences against those powerful enemies; so that those enemies, and a quiet, secure conscience, can at length dwell pretty well together.

Whereas it is asserted in the doctrine, that it is the manner of hypocrites, after a while, in a great measure to leave off this duty; I would observe to you,

1. That it is not intended but that they may commonly continue to the end of life in yielding an external attendance on open prayer, or prayer with others. They may commonly be present at public prayers in the congregation, and also at family prayer. This, in such places of light as this is, men commonly do before ever they are so much as awakened. Many vicious persons, who make no pretence to serious religion, commonly attend public prayers in the congregation, and also more private prayers in the families in which they live, unless it be when carnal designs interfere, or when their youthful pleasures and diversions, and their vain company call them; and then they make no conscience of attending family prayer. Otherwise they may continue to attend upon prayer as long as they live, and yet may truly be said not to call upon God. For such prayer, in the manner of it, is not their own. They are present only for the sake of their credit, or in compliance with others. They may be present at these prayers, and yet have no proper prayer of their own. Many of those concerning whom it may be said, as in Job xv. 4, that *they cast off fear and restrain prayer before God*, are yet frequently present at family and public prayers.

2. But they in a great measure leave off the practice of secret prayer. They come to this pass by degrees. At first they begin to be careless about it, under some particular temptations. Because they have been out in young company, or have been taken up very much with worldly business, they omit it once: after that they more easily omit it again. Thus it presently becomes a frequent thing with them to omit it; and after a while, it comes to that pass, that they seldom attend it. Perhaps they attend it on Sabbath days, and sometimes on other days. But they have ceased to make it a constant practice daily to retire to worship God alone, and to seek his face in secret places. They sometimes do a little to quiet conscience, and just to keep alive their old hope; because it would be shocking to them, even after all their subtle dealing with their consciences, to call themselves converts and yet totally to live without prayer. Yet the practice of secret prayer they have in a great measure left off.

I come now,

III. To the reasons why this is the manner of hypocrites.

1. Hypocrites never had the spirit of prayer given them. They may have been stirred up to the external performance of this duty, and that with a great deal of earnestness and affection, and yet always have been destitute of the true spirit of prayer. The spirit of prayer is a holy spirit, a gracious spirit. We read of the spirit of grace and supplication, Zech. xii. 10: "I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the *spirit of grace and supplications*." Wherever there is a true spirit of supplication, there is the spirit of grace. The true spirit of prayer is no other than God's own Spirit dwelling in the hearts of the saints. And as this spirit comes from God, so doth it naturally tend to God in holy breathings and pantings. It naturally leads to God,

to converse with him by prayer. Therefore the Spirit is said to make intercession for the saints with groanings which cannot be uttered, Rom. viii. 26.

The Spirit of God makes intercession for them, as it is that Spirit which in some respect indites their prayers, and leads them so and so to pour out their souls before God. Therefore the saints are said to worship God in the SPIRIT: Phil. iii. 3, "We are the circumcision who worship God in the Spirit;" and John iv. 23, "The true worshippers worship the Father in spirit and in truth." The truly godly have the spirit of adoption, the spirit of a child, to which it is natural to go to God and call upon him, crying to him as to a father.

But hypocrites have nothing of this spirit of adoption: they have not the spirit of children; for this is a gracious and holy spirit, only given in a real work of regeneration. Therefore it is often mentioned as a part of the distinguishing character of the godly, that they call upon God. Psal. cxlv. 18, 19, "The Lord is nigh to them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth. He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him; he will also hear their cry and will save them." Joel ii. 32, "It shall come to pass, that whosoever calleth on the name of the Lord shall be delivered."

It is natural to one who is truly born from above to pray to God, and to pour out his soul in holy supplications before his heavenly Father. This is as natural to the new nature and life as breathing is to the nature and life of the body. But hypocrites have not this new nature. Those illuminations and affections which they had, went away, and left no change of nature. Therefore prayer naturally dies away in them, having no foundation for the keeping of it up laid in the nature of the soul. It is maintained, while it is maintained, only by a certain force put upon nature. But force is not constant; and as that declines, nature will take place again.

The spirit of a true convert is a spirit of true love to God, and that naturally inclines the soul to those duties wherein it is conversant with God, and makes it to delight in approaching to God. But a hypocrite hath no such spirit. He is left under the reigning power of enmity against God, which naturally inclines him to shun the presence of God.

The spirit of a true convert is a spirit of faith and reliance on the power, wisdom, and mercy of God, and such a spirit is naturally expressed in prayer. True prayer is nothing else but faith expressed. Hence we read of *the prayer of faith*, James v. 15. True Christian prayer is the faith and reliance of the soul breathed forth in words. But a hypocrite is without the spirit of faith. He hath no true reliance or dependence on God, but is really self-dependent.

As to those common convictions and affections which the hypocrite had, and which made him keep up the duty of prayer for a while; they not reaching the bottom of the heart, nor being accompanied with any change of nature, a little thing extinguishes them. The cares of the world commonly choke and suffocate them, and often the pleasures and vanities of youth totally put an end to them, and with them ends their constant practice of the duty of prayer.

2. When a hypocrite hath had his false conversion, his wants are in his sense of things already supplied, his desires are already answered; and so he finds no further business at the throne of grace. He never was sensible that he had any other needs, but a need of being safe from hell. And now that he is converted, as he thinks, that need is supplied. Why then should he still go on to resort to the throne of grace with earnest requests? He is out of danger; all that he was afraid of is removed. He hath got enough to carry him to heaven, and what more should he desire? While he was under awakenings, he had this to stir him up to go to God in prayer, that he was in continual fear of hell

This put him upon crying to God for mercy. But since, in his own opinion, he is converted, he hath no further business about which to go to God. And although he may keep up the duty of prayer in the outward form a little while, for fear of spoiling his hope, yet he will find a dull business of continuing it without any need or necessity, and so by degrees he will let drop the practice. The work of the hypocrite is done when he is converted, and therefore he standeth in no further need of help.

But it is far otherwise with the true convert. His work is not done; but he finds still a great work to do, and great wants to be supplied. He sees himself still to be a poor, empty, helpless creature, and that he still stands in great and continual need of God's help. He is sensible that without God he can do nothing. A false conversion makes a man in his own eyes self-sufficient. He saith he is rich, and increased with goods, and hath need of nothing; and knoweth not that he is wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. But after a true conversion, the soul remains sensible of its own impotence and emptiness, as it is in itself, and its sense of it is rather increased than diminished. It is still sensible of its universal dependence on God for every thing. A true convert is sensible that his grace is very imperfect; and he is very far from having all that he desires. Instead of that, by conversion are begotten in him new desires which he never had before. He now finds in him holy appetites, a hungering and thirsting after righteousness, a longing after more acquaintance and communion with God. So that he hath business enough still at the throne of grace; yea, his business there, instead of being diminished, is, since his conversion, rather increased.

3. The hope which the hypocrite hath of his good estate takes off the force that the command of God before had upon his conscience; so that now he dares neglect so plain a duty. The command which requires the practice of the duty of prayer is exceeding plain. Matt. xxvi. 41, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Eph. vi. 18, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance, and supplication for all saints." Matt. vi. 6, "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret." As long as the hypocrite was in his own apprehension in continual danger of hell, he durst not disobey these commands. But since he is, as he thinks, safe from hell, he is grown bold, he dares to live in the neglect of the plainest command in the Bible.

4. It is the manner of hypocrites, after a while, to return to sinful practices which will tend to keep them from praying. While they were under convictions, they reformed their lives, and walked very exactly. This reformation continues for a little time perhaps after their supposed conversion, while they are much affected with hope and false comfort. But as these things die away, their old lusts revive, and they by degrees return like the dog to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. They return to their sensual practices, to their worldly practices, to their proud and contentious practices, as before. And no wonder this makes them forsake their closets. Sinning and praying agree not well together. If a man be constant in the duty of secret prayer, it will tend to restrain him from wilful sinning. So, on the other hand, if he allow himself in sinful practices, it will restrain him from praying. It will give quite another turn to his mind, so that he will have no disposition to the practice of such a duty. It will be contrary to him. A man who knows that he lives in sin against God, will not be inclined to come daily into the presence of God; but will rather be inclined to fly from his presence, as Adam,

when he had eaten of the forbidden fruit, ran away from God, and hid himself among the trees of the garden.

To keep up the duty of prayer after he hath given loose to his lusts, would tend very much to disquiet a man's conscience. It would give advantage to his conscience to testify aloud against him. If he should come from his wickedness into the presence of God, immediately to speak to him, his conscience would, as it were, fly in his face. Therefore hypocrites, as they by degrees admit their wicked practices, exclude prayer.

5. Hypocrites never counted the cost of perseverance in seeking God, and of following him to the end of life. To continue instant in prayer with all perseverance to the end of life, requires much care, watchfulness, and labor. For much opposition is made to it by the flesh, the world, and the devil; and Christians meet with many temptations to forsake this practice. He that would persevere in this duty must be laborious in religion in general. But hypocrites never count the cost of such labor; i. e., they never were prepared in the disposition of their minds to give their lives to the service of God, and to the duties of religion. It is therefore no great wonder they are weary and give out, after they have continued for a while, as their affections are gone, and they find that prayer to them grows irksome and tedious.

6. Hypocrites have no interest in those gracious promises which God hath made to his people, of those spiritual supplies which are needful in order to uphold them in the way of their duty to the end. God hath promised to true saints that they shall not forsake him. Jer. xxxii. 40, "I will put my fear into their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." He hath promised that he will keep them in the way of their duty 1 Thess. v. 23, 24, "And the God of peace sanctify you wholly. And I pray God your spirit, soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." But hypocrites have no interest in these and such like promises; and therefore are liable to fall away. If God do not uphold men, there is no dependence on their steadfastness. If the Spirit of God depart from them, they will soon become careless and profane, and there will be an end to their seeming devotion and piety.

APPLICATION

May be in a use of EXHORTATION, in two branches.

I. I would exhort those who have entertained a hope of their being true converts, and yet since their supposed conversion have left off the duty of secret prayer, and do ordinarily allow themselves in the omission of it, to throw away their hope. If you have left off calling upon God, it is time for you to leave off hoping and flattering yourselves with an imagination that you are the children of God. Probably it will be a very difficult thing for you to do this. It is hard for a man to let go a hope of heaven, on which he hath once allowed himself to lay hold, and which he hath retained for a considerable time. True conversion is a rare thing; but that men are brought off from a false hope of conversion, after they are once settled and established in it, and have continued in it for some time, is much more rare.

Those things in men, which, if they were known to others, would be sufficient to convince others that they are hypocrites, will not convince themselves; and those things which would be sufficient to convince them concerning others, and to cause them to cast others entirely out of their charity, will not be sufficient to convince them concerning themselves. They can make larger allowances for themselves than they can for others. They can find out ways to

solve objections against their own hope, when they can find none in the like case for their neighbor.

But if your case be such as is spoken of in the doctrine, it is surely time for you to seek a better hope, and another work of God's Spirit, than ever you have yet experienced; something more thorough and effectual When you see and find by experience, that the seed which was sown in your hearts, though at first it sprang up and seemed flourishing, yet is withering away, as by the heat of the sun, or is choked, as with thorns; this shows in what sort of ground the seed was sown, that it is either stony or thorny ground; and that therefore it is necessary you should pass through another change, whereby your heart may become good ground, which shall bring forth fruit with patience.

I insist not on that as a reason why you should not throw away your hope, that you had the judgment of others, that the change of which you were the subject was right. It is a small matter to be judged of man's judgment, whether you be approved or condemned, and whether it be by minister or people, wise or unwise. 1 Cor. iv. 3, "It is a very small thing that I should be judged of you or of man's judgment." If your goodness have proved to be as the morning cloud and early dew; if you be one of those who have forsaken God, and left off calling upon his name, you have the judgment of God, and the sentence of God in the Scriptures against you, which is a thousand times more than to have the judgment of all the wise and godly men and ministers in the world in your favor.

Others, from your account of things, may have been obliged to have charity for you, and to think that, provided you were not mistaken, and in your account did not misrepresent things, or express them by wrong terms, you were really converted. But what a miserable foundation is this, upon which to build a hope as to your eternal state!

Here I request your attention to a few things in particular, which I have to say to you concerning your hope.

1. Why will you retain that hope which by evident experience you find poisons you? Is it reasonable to think, that a holy hope, a hope that is from heaven, would have such an influence? No, surely; nothing of such a malignant influence comes from that world of purity and glory. No poison groweth in the paradise of God. The same hope which leads men to sin in this world will lead to hell hereafter. Why therefore will you retain such a hope, of which your own experience shows you the ill tendency, in that it encourages you to lead a wicked life? For certainly that life is a wicked life wherein you live in the neglect of so well-known a duty as that of secret prayer, and in the disobedience of so plain a command of God, as that by which this duty is enjoined. And is not a way of disobedience to God a way to hell?

If your own experience of the nature and tendency of your hope will not convince you of the falseness of it, what will? Are you resolved to retain your hope, let it prove ever so unsound and hurtful? Will you hold it fast till you go to hell with it? Many men cling to a false hope, and embrace it so closely, that they never let it go till the flames of hell cause their arms to unclench and let go their hold. Consider how you will answer it at the day of judgment, when God shall call you to an account for your folly in resting in such a hope. Will it be a sufficient answer for you to say, that you had the charity of others, and that they thought your conversion was right?

Certainly it is foolish for men to imagine, that God had no more wisdom, or could contrive no other way of bestowing comfort and hope of eternal life, than one which should encourage men to forsake him.

2. How is your doing, as you do, consistent with loving God above all? If you have not a spirit to love God above your dearest earthly friends, and your most pleasant earthly enjoyments; the Scriptures are very plain, and full in it, that you are not true Christians. But if you had indeed such a spirit, would you thus grow weary of the practice of drawing near to him, and become habitually so averse to it, as in a great measure to cast off so plain a duty, which is so much the life of a child of God? It is the nature of love to be averse to absence, and to love a near access to those whom we love. We love to be with them; we delight to come often to them, and to have much conversation with them. But when a person who hath heretofore been wont to converse freely with another, by degrees forsakes him, grows strange, and converses with him but little, and that although the other be importunate with him for the continuance of their former intimacy; this plainly shows the coldness of his heart towards him.

The neglect of the duty of prayer seems to be inconsistent with supreme love to God also upon another account, and that is, that it is against the will of God so plainly revealed. True love to God seeks to please God in every thing, and universally to conform to his will.

3. Your thus restraining prayer before God is not only inconsistent with the love, but also with the fear of God. It is an argument that you cast off fear, as is manifest by that text, Job xv. 4: "Yea, thou castest off fear, and restrainest prayer before God." While you thus live in the transgression of so plain a command of God, you evidently show, that there is no fear of God before your eyes. Psalm xxxvi. 1, "The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes."

4. Consider how living in such a neglect is inconsistent with leading a holy life. We are abundantly instructed in Scripture, that true Christians do lead a holy life; that without holiness no man shall see the Lord, Heb. xii. 14; and that every one that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as Christ is pure, 1 John iii. 3. In Prov. xvi. 17, it is said, "The *highway* of the upright is to depart from evil," i. e., it is, as it were, the common beaten road in which all the godly travel. To the like purpose is Isaiah xxxv. 8, "A *highway* shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called *the way of holiness;* the unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for *those*," i. e., those redeemed persons spoken of in the foregoing verses. It is spoken of in Rom. viii. 1, as the character of all believers, that they walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

But how is a life, in a great measure prayerless, consistent with a holy life? To lead a holy life is to lead a life devoted to God; a life of worshipping and serving God; a life consecrated to the service of God. But how doth he lead such a life who doth not so much as maintain the duty of prayer? How can such a man be said to walk by the Spirit, and to be a servant of the Most High God? A holy life is a life of faith. The life that true Christians live in the world, they live by the faith of the Son of God. But who can believe that that man lives by faith who lives without prayer, which is the natural expression of faith? Prayer is as natural an expression of faith as breathing is of life; and to say a man lives a life of faith, and yet lives a prayerless life, is every whit as inconsistent and incredible, as to say, that a man lives without breathing. A prayerless life is so far from being a holy life, that it is a profane life: he that lives so, lives like a heathen, who calleth not on God's name; he that lives a prayerless life, lives without God in the world.

5. If you live in the neglect of secret prayer, you show your good will to neglect all the worship of God. He that prays only when he prays with

others, would not pray at all, were it not that the eyes of others are upon him. He that will not pray where none but God seeth him, manifestly doth not pray at all out of respect to God, or regard to his all-seeing eye, and therefore doth in effect cast off all prayer. And he that casts off prayer, in effect casts off all the worship of God, of which prayer is the principal duty. Now, what a miserable saint is he who is no worshipper of God! He that casts off the worship of God, in effect casts off God himself: he refuses to own him, or to be conversant with him as his God. For the way in which men own God, and are conversant with him as their God, is by worshipping him.

6. How can you expect to dwell with God forever, if you so neglect and forsake him here? This your practice shows, that you place not your happiness in God, in nearness to him, and communion with him. He who refuses to come and visit, and converse with a friend, and who in a great measure forsakes him, when he is abundantly invited and importuned to come; plainly shows that he places not his happiness in the company and conversation of that friend. Now, if this be the case with you respecting God, then how can you expect to have it for your happiness to all eternity, to be with God, and to enjoy holy communion with him?

Let those persons who hope they are converted, and yet have in a great measure left off the duty of secret prayer, and whose manner it is ordinarily to neglect it, for their own sake seriously consider these things. For what will it profit them to please themselves with *that*, while they live, which will fail them at last, and leave them in fearful and amazing disappointment?

It is probable, that some of you who have entertained a good opinion of your state, and have looked upon yourselves as converts; but have of late in a great measure left off the duty of secret prayer; will this evening attend secret prayer, and so may continue to do for a little while after your hearing this sermon, to the end, that you may solve the difficulty and the objection which is made against the truth of your hope. But this will not hold. As it hath been in former instances of the like nature, so what you now hear will have such effect upon you but a little while. When the business and cares of the world shall again begin to crowd a little upon you, or the next time you shall go out into young company, it is probable you will again neglect this duty. The next time a *frolic* shall be appointed, to which it is proposed to you to go, it is highly probable you will neglect not only secret prayer, but also family prayer. Or at least, after a while, you will come to the same pass again, as before, in casting off fear and restraining prayer before God.

It is not very likely that you will ever *be constant and persevering in this duty*, until you shall have obtained a better principle in your hearts. The streams which have no springs to feed them will dry up. The drought and heat consume the snow waters. Although they run plentifully in the spring, yet when the sun ascends higher with a burning heat, they are gone. The seed that is sown in stony places, though it seems to flourish at present, yet as the sun shall rise with a burning heat, will wither away. None will bring forth fruit with patience, but those whose hearts are become good ground.

Without any heavenly seed remaining in them, men may, whenever they fall in among the godly, continue all their lives to talk like saints. They may, for their credit's sake, tell of what they have experienced: but their *deeds* will not hold. They may continue to tell of their inward experiences, and yet live in the neglect of secret prayer, and of other duties.

II. I would take occasion from this doctrine to exhort all to persevere in the duty of prayer. This exhortation is much insisted on in the word of

God. It is insisted on in the Old Testament: 1 Chron. xvi. 11, "Seek the Lord and his strength, seek his face *continually*."—Isai. lxii. 7, "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence;" i. e., be not silent as to the voice of prayer, as is manifest by the following words, "and give him no rest till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." Israel of old is reproved for growing weary of the duty of prayer. Isai. xliii. 22, "But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob, thou hast been weary of me, O Israel."

Perseverance in the duty of prayer is very much insisted on in the New Testament, as Luke xviii. at the beginning: "A man ought always to pray, and not to faint;" i. e., not to be discouraged or weary of the duty; but should always continue in it. Again, Luke xxi. 36, "Watch ye therefore, and pray *always*." We have the example of Anna the prophetess set before us, Luke ii. 36, &c., who, though she had lived to be more than a hundred years old, yet never was weary of this duty. It is said, "she departed not from the temple, but served God, with fastings and prayers, night and day." Cornelius also is commended for his constancy in this duty. It is said, that he prayed to God always, Acts x. 2. The Apostle Paul, in his epistles, insists very much on constancy in this duty: Rom. xii. 12, "Continuing instant in prayer." Eph. vi. 18, 19, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance." Col. iv. 2, "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same." 1 Thess. v. 17, "Pray without ceasing." To the same effect the Apostle Peter, 1 Pet. iv. 7, "Watch unto prayer."—Thus abundantly the Scripture insists upon it, that we should persevere in the duty of prayer, which shows that it is of very great importance that we should persevere. If the contrary be the manner of hypocrites, as hath been shown in the doctrine, then surely we ought to beware of this leaven.

But here let the following things be particularly considered as motives to perseverance in this duty.

1. That perseverance in the way of duty is necessary to salvation, and is abundantly declared so to be in the holy Scriptures; as Isai. lxiv. 5, "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways: behold, thou art wroth, for we have sinned: in those is *continuance*, and we shall be saved." Heb. x. 38, 39, "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man *draw back*, my soul hath no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who *draw back unto perdition;* but of them that believe to the saving of the soul." Rom. xi. 22, "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but towards thee, goodness, if thou *continue* in his goodness; *otherwise* thou also shalt be cut off."—So in many other places.

Many, when they think they are converted, seem to imagine that their work is done, and that there is nothing else needful in order to their going to heaven. Indeed perseverance in holiness of life is not necessary to salvation, as the righteousness by which a right to salvation is obtained. Nor is actual perseverance necessary in order to our becoming interested in that righteousness by which we are justified. For as soon as ever a soul hath believed in Christ, or hath put forth one act of faith in him, it becomes interested in his righteousness, and in all the promises purchased by it.

But persevering in the way of duty is necessary to salvation, as a concomitant and evidence of a title to salvation. There is never a title to salvation without it, though it be not the righteousness by which a title to salvation is obtained. It is necessary to salvation, as it is the necessary consequence of true

faith. It is an evidence which universally attends uprightness, and the *defect* of it is an infallible evidence of the want of uprightness. Psal. cxxv. 4, 5. There such as are good and upright in heart, are distinguished from such as fall away or turn aside: "Do good, O Lord, to those that are good, and to them that are upright in their hearts. As for such as *turn aside to their crooked ways*, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity. But peace shall be upon Israel. It is mentioned as an evidence that the hearts of the children of Israel were not right with God, that they did not persevere in the ways of holiness. Psal. lxxviii. 8, "A generation that set not their hearts aright, and whose spirit was not *steadfast* with God."

Christ gives this as a distinguishing character of those that are his *disciples indeed*, and of a true and saving faith, that it is accompanied with perseverance in the obedience of Christ's word. John viii. 31, "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye *continue* in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed:" This is mentioned as a necessary evidence of an interest in Christ, Heb. iii. 14: "We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end."

Perseverance is not only a necessary concomitant and evidence of a title to salvation; but also a necessary prerequisite to the actual possession of eternal life. It is the only way to heaven, the narrow way that leadeth to life. Hence Christ exhorts the church of Philadelphia to persevere in holiness from this consideration, that it was necessary in order to her obtaining the crown. Rev. iii. 11, "Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." It is necessary, not only that persons should once have been walking in the way of duty, but that they should be found so doing when Christ cometh. Luke xii. 43, "Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing." Holding out to the end is often made the condition of actual salvation. Matt x. 22, "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." And Rev. ii. 10, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

2. In order to your own perseverance in the way of duty, your own care and watchfulness is necessary. For though it be promised that true saints shall persevere, yet that is no argument that their care and watchfulness is not necessary in order to it; because their care to keep the commands of God is the thing promised. If the saints should fail of care, watchfulness, and diligence to persevere in holiness, that failure of their care and diligence would itself be a failure of holiness. They who persevere not in watchfulness and diligence, persevere not in holiness of life, for holiness of life very much consists in watchfulness and diligence to keep the commands of God. It is one promise of the covenant of grace, that the saints shall keep God's commandments, Ezek. xi. 19, 20. Yet that is no argument that they have no need to take care to keep these commandments, or to do their duty. So the promise of God, that the saints shall persevere in holiness, is no argument that it is not necessary that they should take heed lest they fall away

Therefore the Scriptures abundantly warn men to watch over themselves diligently, and to give earnest heed lest they fall away: 1 Cor. xv. 13, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." 1 Cor. x. 12, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." Heb. iii. 12, 13, 14, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." Heb. iv 1, "Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being

left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." 2 Pet. iii. 17, "Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness." 2 John v. 8, "Look to yourselves that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward."

Thus you see how earnestly the Scriptures press on Christians exhortations to take diligent heed to themselves that they fall not away. And certainly these cautions are not without reason.

The Scriptures particularly insist upon watchfulness in order to perseverance in the duty of prayer. *Watch and pray*, saith Christ; which implies that we should watch *unto* prayer, as the Apostle Peter says, 1 Pet. iv. 7. It implies, that we should watch against a neglect of prayer, as well as against other sins. The apostle, in places which have been already mentioned, directs us to pray with all prayer, *watching* thereunto with all perseverance, and to *continue* in prayer, and *watch* in the same. Nor is it any wonder that the apostles so much insisted on watching, in order to a continuance in prayer with all perseverance; for there are many temptations to neglect this duty; first to be inconstant in it, and from time to time to omit it; then in a great measure to neglect it. The devil watches to draw us away from God, and to hinder us from going to him in prayer. We are surrounded with one and another tempting object, business and diversion: particularly we meet with many things which are great temptations to a neglect of this duty.

3. To move you to persevere in the duty of prayer, consider how much you always stand in need of the help of God. If persons who have formerly attended this duty, leave it off, the language of it is, that now they stand in no further need of God's help, that they have no further occasion to go to God with requests and supplications: when indeed it is in God we live, and move, and have our being. We cannot draw a breath without his help. You need his help every day, for the supply of your outward wants; and especially you stand in continual need of him to help your souls. Without his protection they would immediately fall into the hands of the devil, who always stands as a roaring lion, ready, whenever he is permitted, to fall upon the souls of men and devour them. If God should indeed preserve your lives, but should otherwise forsake and leave you to yourselves, you would be most miserable: your lives would be a curse to you.

Those that are converted, if God should forsake them, would soon fall away totally from a state of grace into a state far more miserable than ever they were in before their conversion. They have no strength of their own to resist those powerful enemies who surround them. Sin and Satan would immediately carry them away, as a mighty flood, if God should forsake them. You stand in need of daily supplies from God. Without God you can receive no spiritual light nor comfort, can exercise no grace, can bring forth no fruit. Without God your souls will wither and pine away, and sink into a most wretched state. You continually need the instructions and directions of God. What can a little child do, in a vast howling wilderness, without some one to guide it, and to lead it in the right way? Without God you will soon fall into snares, and pits, and many fatal calamities.

Seeing therefore you stand in such continual need of the help of God, how reasonable is it that you should continually seek it of him, and perseveringly acknowledge your dependence upon him, by resorting to him, to spread your needs before him, and to offer up your requests to him in prayer.—Let us consider how miserable we should be, if we should leave off prayer and God at the same

time should leave off to take any care of us, or to afford us any more supplies of his grace. By our constancy in prayer, we cannot be profitable to God; and if we leave it off, God will sustain no damage: he doth not need our prayers; Job xxxv. 6, 7. But if God cease to care for us and to help us, we immediately sink: we can do nothing: we can receive nothing without him.

4. Consider the great benefit of a constant, diligent, and persevering attendance on this duty. It is one of the greatest and most excellent means of nourishing the new nature, and of causing the soul to flourish and prosper. It is an excellent means of keeping up an acquaintance with God, and of growing in the knowledge of God. It is the way to a life of communion with God. It is an excellent means of taking off the heart from the vanities of the world, and of causing the mind to be conversant in heaven. It is an excellent preservative from sin and the wiles of the devil, and a powerful antidote against the poison of the old serpent. It is a duty whereby strength is derived from God against the lusts and corruptions of the heart, and the snares of the world.

It hath a great tendency to keep the soul in a wakeful frame, and to lead us to a strict walk with God, and to a life that shall be fruitful in such good works, as tend to adorn the doctrine of Christ, and to cause our light so to shine before others, that they, seeing our good works, shall glorify our Father who is in heaven. And if the duty be constantly and diligently attended, it will be a very pleasant duty. Slack and slothful attendance upon it, and unsteadiness in it, are the causes which make it so great a burden as it is to some persons. Their slothfulness in it hath naturally the effect to beget a dislike of the duty, and a great indisposition to it. But if it be constantly and diligently attended, it is one of the best means of leading, not only a Christian and amiable, but also a pleasant life; a life of much sweet fellowship with Christ, and of the abundant enjoyment of the light of his countenance.

Besides, the great power which prayer, when duly attended, hath with God, is worthy of your notice. By it men become like Jacob, who, as a prince, had power with God, and prevailed, when he wrestled with God for the blessing. See the power of prayer represented in James v. 16—18. By these things you may be sensible how much you will lose, if you shall be negligent of this great duty of calling upon God; and how ill you will consult your own interest by such a neglect.

I conclude my discourse with two directions in order to constancy and perseverance in this duty.

1. Watch against the beginnings of a neglect of this duty. Persons who have for a time practised this duty, and afterwards neglect it, commonly leave it off by degrees. While their convictions and religious affections last, they are very constant in their closets, and no worldly business, or company, or diversion hinders them. But as their convictions and affections begin to die away, they begin to find excuses to neglect it sometimes. They are now so hurried; they have now such and such things to attend to; or there are now such inconveniences in the way, that they persuade themselves they may very excusably omit it for this time. Afterwards it pretty frequently so happens, that they have something to hinder, something which they call a just excuse. After a while, a less thing becomes a sufficient excuse than was allowed to be such at first. Thus the person by degrees contracts more and more of a habit of neglecting prayer, and becomes more and more indisposed to it. And even when he doth perform it, it is in such a poor, dull, heartless, miserable manner, that he says to himself, he might as well not do it at all, as do it so. Thus he makes his own dulness and indisposition an excuse for wholly neglecting it,

or at least for living in a great measure in the neglect of it. After this manner do Satan and men's own corruptions inveigle them to their ruin.

Therefore beware of the first beginnings of a neglect: watch against temptations to it: take heed how you begin to allow of excuses. Be watchful to keep up the duty in the height of it; let it not so much as begin to sink. For when you give way, though it be but little, it is like giving way to an enemy in the field of battle; the first beginning of a retreat greatly encourages the enemy, and weakens the retreating soldiers.

2. Let me direct you to forsake all such practices as you find by experience do indispose you to the duty of secret prayer. Examine the things in which you have allowed yourselves, and inquire whether they have had this effect. You are able to look over your past behavior, and may doubtless, on an impartial consideration, make a judgment of the practices and courses in which you have allowed yourselves.

Particularly let young people examine their manner of *company keeping*, and the round of diversions in which, with their companions, they have allowed themselves. I only desire that you would ask at the mouth of your own consciences what has been the effect of these things with respect to your attendance on the duty of secret prayer. Have you not found that such practices have tended to the neglect of this duty? Have you not found that after them you have been more indisposed to it, and less conscious and careful to attend it? Yea, have they not from time to time actually been the means of your neglecting it?

If you cannot deny that this is really the case, then, if you seek the good of your souls, forsake these practices. Whatever you may plead for them, as that there is no hurt in them, or that there is a time for all things, and the like; yet if you find this hurt in the consequence of them, it is time for you to forsake them. And if you value heaven more than a little worldly diversion; if you set a higher price on eternal glory than on a dance or a song, you will forsake them.

If these things be lawful in themselves, yet if your experience show that they are attended with such a consequence as I have now mentioned, that is enough. It is lawful in itself for you to enjoy your right hand and your right eye: but if, by experience, you find they cause you to offend, it is time for you to cut off the one, and pluck out the other, as you would rather go to heaven without them than go to hell with them, into that place of torment where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

SERMON XXX.

THE FEARFULNESS WHICH WILL HEREAFTER SURPRISE SINNERS IN ZION, REPRESENTED AND IMPROVED.

ISAIAH xxxiii. 14.—The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites: who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?

THERE are two kinds of persons among God's professing people; the one is those who are truly godly, who are spoken of in the verse following the text; "He that walketh righteously and speaketh uprightly," &c. The other kind consists of sinners in Zion, or hypocrites. It is to be observed, that the prophet in this chapter speaks interchangeably, first to the one, and then to the other of these characters of men; awfully threatening and denouncing the wrath of God against the one, and comforting the other with gracious promises. Thus you may observe, in the 5th and 6th verses, there are comfortable promises to the godly; then in the eight following verses, awful judgments are threatened against the sinners in Zion. Again, in the two next verses are blessed promises to the sincerely godly, and in the former part of verse 17. And then in the latter part of verse 17, and in verses 18, and 19, are terrible threatenings to sinners in Zion: then in the verses that follow are gracious promises to the godly.

Our text is part of what is said in this chapter to sinners in Zion. In verse 10, it is said, "Now will I rise, saith the Lord; now will I be exalted, now will I lift up myself," i. e., Now will I arise to execute my wrath upon the ungodly; I will not let them alone any longer. They shall see that I am not asleep, and that I am not regardless of mine own honor. "Now will I be exalted." Though they have cast contempt upon me, yet I will vindicate the honor of my own majesty: I will exalt myself, and show my greatness, and my awful majesty in their destruction. "Now will I lift up myself;" now I will no longer have mine honor to be trampled in the dust by them: but my glory shall be manifested in their misery.

In verse 11, the prophet proceeds, "Ye shall conceive chaff, ye shall bring forth stubble:" i. e., Ye shall pursue happiness in ways of wickedness, but you shall not obtain it; you are as ground which brings forth no fruit, as if only chaff were sowed in it; it brings forth nothing but stubble, which is fit for nothing but to be burned.

It seems to have been the manner in that land where the corn grew very rank, when they had reaped the wheat, and gathered it off from the ground, to set fire to the stubble; which is alluded to here; and therefore it is added, "Your breath, as fire, shall devour you:" i. e., Your own wicked speeches, your wickedness that you commit with your breath, or with your tongues, shall set fire to the stubble and devour it.

Then it follows in verse 12, "And the people shall be as the burnings of lime." As they are wont to burn lime in a great and exceeding fierce fire, till stones, and bones, and other things are burnt to lime; so shall the wicked be burnt in the fire of God's wrath. "As thorns cut up shall they be burnt in the fire:" as briers and thorns are the incumbrance and curse of the ground where they grow, and are wont to be burnt; so shall it be with the wicked that are among God's people and grow in God's field. Heb. vi. 7, 8, "For the earth

which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briers, is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned."

Then it follows in verse 13, "Hear ye that are afar off, what I have done; and ye that are near, acknowledge my might." This implies that God will, by the destruction of ungodly men, manifest his glory very publicly, even in the sight of the whole world, both in the sight of those that are near, and those that are afar off." "Acknowledge my might." Which implies that God will execute wrath upon ungodly men, in such a manner as extraordinarily to show forth his great and mighty power. The destruction and misery of the wicked will be so dreadful that it will be a dreadful manifestation of the omnipotent power of God, that he can execute so dreadful misery; agreeably to Rom. ix. 22, "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath, fitted to destruction."

Next follow the words of the text. "The sinners in Zion are afraid: fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites: who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" The sense of the text is, that the time will come when fearfulness will surprise the sinners in Zion; because they will know, that they are about to be cast into a devouring fire, which they must suffer forever and ever, and which none can endure. This I shall make the subject of my present discourse; and shall particularly speak upon the subject,

1. By inquiring, who are sinners in Zion?
2. By showing how fearfulness will hereafter surprise them.
3. By insisting on those reasons of this fear and surprise, which are mentioned in the text.
4. By showing why sinners in Zion will be especially surprised with fear.

I. It may be inquired, Who are the sinners in Zion?—I answer, that they are those who are in a natural condition among the visible people of God. Zion, or the city of David of old, was a type of the church; and the church of God in Scripture is perhaps more frequently called by the name of Zion than by any other name. And commonly by Zion is meant the true church of Christ, or the invisible church of true saints. But sometimes by this name is meant the visible church, consisting of those who are outwardly, by profession and external privileges, the people of God. This is intended by Zion in this text.

The greater part of the world are sinners: Christ's flock is, and ever hath been but a little flock. And the sinners of the world are of two sorts: there are those that are visibly of Satan's kingdom, who are without the pale of the visible church. Such are all who do not profess the true religion, nor attend the external ordinances of it. Beside these there are the sinners in Zion. Both are objects of the displeasure and wrath of God; but his wrath is more especially manifested in Scripture against the latter. Sinners in Zion will have by far the lowest place in hell. They are exalted nearest to heaven in this world, and they will be lowest in hell in another. The same is meant in the text, by hypocrites, as sinners in Zion. Sinners in Zion are all hypocrites; for they make a profession of the true religion; they attend God's ordinances, and make a show of being the worshippers of God; but all is in hypocrisy.—I now hasten as was proposed,

II. To show how fearfulness will hereafter surprise sinners in Zion.

1. They will hereafter be afraid. Now many of them seem to have little or no fear. They are quiet and secure. Nothing will awaken them: the most

awful threatenings and the loudest warnings do not much move them. They are not so much moved with them, but that they can eat, and drink, and sleep, and go about their worldly concerns without much disturbance. But the time will come, when the hardest and most stupid wretches will be awakened. Though now preaching will not awaken them, and the death of others will not make them afraid; though seeing others awakened and converted will not much affect them; though they can stand all that is to be heard and seen in a time of general outpouring of the Spirit of God, without being much moved; yet the time will come, when they will be awakened, and fear will take hold of them. They will be afraid of the wrath of God: however senseless they be now, they will hereafter be sensible of the awful greatness of God, and that it is a fearful thing to fall into his hands.

2. They will be surprised with fear. This seems to imply two things; viz., the greatness of their fear, and the suddenness of it.

(1.) The greatness of their fear. Surprise argues a high degree of fear. Their fears will be to the degree of astonishment. Some of the sinners in Zion are somewhat afraid now: they now and then have some degree of fear. They are not indeed convinced that there is such a place as hell; but they are afraid there is. They are not thoroughly awakened; neither are they quite easy. They have at certain times inward molestations from their consciences; but they have no such degrees of fear, as to put them upon any thorough endeavors to escape future wrath.

However, hereafter they will have fear enough, as much, and a great deal more than they will be able to stand under. Their fear will be to the degree of horror; they will be horribly afraid; and terrors will take hold on them as waters. Thus we read of "their fear coming as a desolation, and of distress and anguish coming upon them," Prov. i. 27. It is also very emphatically said of the wicked, that "trouble and anguish shall prevail against him, as a king ready to the battle," Job xv. 24.

The stoutest heart of them all will then melt with fear. The hearts of those who are of a sturdy spirit, and perhaps scorn to own themselves afraid of any man, and are even ashamed to own themselves afraid of the wrath of God, will then become as weak as water, as weak as the heart of a little child. And the most reserved of them will not be able to hide his fears. Their faces will turn pale; they will appear with amazement in their countenances; every joint in them will tremble; all their bones will shake; and their knees will smite one against another; nor will they be able to refrain from crying out with fear and rending the air with the most dismal shrieks.

(2.) They will be suddenly seized with fear. The sinners in Zion often remain secure, till they are surprised, as with a cry at midnight. They will be, as it were, awakened out of their secure sleep in a dismal fright. They will see an unexpected calamity coming upon them; far more dreadful than they were aware of, and coming at an unexpected season.

With respect to the time when the wicked shall be thus surprised with fear;

1. It is often so on a death-bed. Many things pass in their lifetime, which one would think might well strike terror into their souls; as when they see others die, who are as young as they, and of like condition and circumstances with themselves, whereby they may see how uncertain their lives are, and how unsafe their souls. It may well surprise many sinners, to consider how old they are grown, and are yet in a Christless state; how much of their opportunity to get an interest in Christ is irrecoverably gone, and how little remains; also how much greater their disadvantages now are, than they have been. But

these things do not terrify them: as age increases, so do the hardness and stupidity of their hearts grow upon them.

But when death comes, then the sinner is often filled with astonishment. It may be, when he is first taken sick, he has great hope that he shall recover; as men are ready to flatter themselves with hopes, that things will be as they fain would have them. But when the distemper comes to prevail much upon him, and he sees that he is going into eternity; when he sees that all the medicines of physicians are in vain, that all the care and endeavors of friends are to no purpose, that nothing seems to help him, that his strength is gone, that his friends weep over him, and look upon his case as desperate; when he sees, by the countenance and behavior of the physician, that he looks upon his case as past hope, and perhaps overhears a whispering in the room, wherein his friends signify one to another, that they look upon it that he is struck with death, or wherein they tell one another, that his extreme parts grow cold, that his countenance and manner of breathing, and his pulse, show death, and that he begins to be in a cold death sweat; and when perhaps, by and by, some one thinks himself bound in duty and faithfulness to let him know the worst, and therefore comes and asks him whether or no he be sensible that he is dying—then how doth fearfulness surprise the sinner in Zion! How doth his heart melt with fear! This is the thing which he feared ever since he was taken sick; but till now he had hope that he should recover. The physician did not speak; or if he despaired, he spoke of such and such medicines as being very proper; and he hoped that they would be effectual; and when these failed, he changed his medicines, and applied something new: then the sinner hoped that that would be effectual. Thus, although he constantly grew worse and worse, still he hoped to recover.

At the same time he cried to God to spare him, and made promises how he would live, if God would spare him; and he hoped that God would hear him. He observed also that his friends, and perhaps the minister, seemed to pray earnestly for him; and he could not but hope that those prayers would be answered, and he should be restored. But now how doth his heart sink and die within him! How doth he look about with a frighted countenance! How quick is the motion of his eye, through inward fear! And how quick and sudden are all his motions! What a frightful hurry doth he seem to be in! How doth every thing look to him when he sees pale grim death staring him in the face, and a vast eternity within a few hours or minutes of him!

It may be, he still struggles for a little hope; he is loth to believe what is told him; he tells those who tell him that he is dying, that he hopes not; he hopes that they are more affrighted than they need be; he hopes that those symptoms arise from some other cause; and, like a poor drowning man, he catches at slender and brittle twigs, and clinches his hands about whatever he sees within his reach.

But as death creeps more and more on him, he sees his twigs break, all his hopes of life fail, and he sees he must die. O! there is nothing but death before him! He hath been hoping; but his hopes are all dashed; he sees this world, and all that belongs to it, are gone. Now come the thoughts of hell into his mind with amazement. O! how shall he go out of the world? He knows he hath no interest in Christ; his sins stare him in the face. O the dreadful gulf of eternity! He had been crying to God, perhaps since he was sick, to save him; and he had some hope, if it were his last sickness, that yet God would pity him, and give him pardoning grace before he should die. He begged and pleaded, and he hoped that God would have pity on his poor soul. At

the same time he asked others to pray for him, and he had been looking day after day for some light to shine into his soul. But, alas! now he is dying, and his friends ask him, how death appears to him? Whether any light appear? Whether God have not given him some token of his favor? And he answers, No, with a poor, faltering, trembling voice, if he be able to speak at all: or if his friends ask a signal of hope, he can give none.

Now death comes on him more and more, and he is just on the brink of eternity. Who can express the fear, the misgivings, the hangings back, and the horrible fright and amazement, that his soul is the subject of? Some who, in such circumstances, have been able to speak, have been known to cry out, *O eternity! eternity!* And some, *O! a thousand worlds for an inch of time! O if they might but live a little while longer!* But it must not be; go they must. They feel the frame of nature dissolving, and perceive the soul is just going; for sometimes the exercise of reason seems to hold to the last.

What, in such a case, is felt in the soul, in those last moments, when it is just breaking its bands with the body, about to fetch its leap, and is on the edge of eternity, and the very brink of hell, without any Saviour, or the least testimony of divine mercy: I say, what is sometimes felt by Christless souls in these moments, none can tell; nor is it within the compass of our conception.

2. The misery of the departed soul of a sinner, besides what it now feels, consists in a great part in amazing fears of what is yet to come. When the union of the soul and body is actually broken, and the body has fetched its last gasp, the soul forsakes its old habitation, and then falls into the hands of devils, who fly upon it, and seize it more violently than ever hungry lions flew upon their prey. And with what horror will it fall into those cruel hands!

If we imagine to ourselves the dreadful fear with which a lamb or kid falls into the paws of a wolf, which lays hold of it with open mouth; or if we imagine to ourselves the feeling of a little child, that hath been pursued by a lion, when it is taken hold of, and sees the terrible creature open his devouring jaws to tear it in pieces; or the feeling of those two and forty children, who were cursed by Elisha, when they fell into the paws of the bears that tore them in pieces: I say, if we could have a perfect idea of that terror and astonishment which a little child has in such a case, yet we should have but a faint idea of what is felt in the departing soul of a sinner, when it falls into the hands of those cruel devils, those roaring lions, which then lay hold of it!

And when the poor soul is carried to hell, and there is tormented, and suffers the wrath of the Almighty, and is overwhelmed and crushed with it, it will also be amazed with the apprehensions of what shall yet remain. To think of an eternity of this torment remaining, O how will it fill, and overbear, and sink down the poor soul! How will the thought of the duration of this torment without end cause the heart to melt like wax! How will the thought of it sink the soul into the bottomless pit of darkness and gloominess! Even those proud and sturdy spirits, the devils, do tremble at the thoughts of that greater torment which they are to suffer at the day of judgment. So will the poor damned souls of men. They will already have vastly more than they will be able to bear: how then will they tremble at the thought of having their misery so vastly augmented!

Persons sometimes in this world are afraid of the day of judgment. If there be an earthquake, or if there be more than common thunder and lightning, or if there be some unusual sight in the heavens, their hearts are ready to tremble for fear that the day of judgment is at hand. O how then do the poor souls in hell fear it, who know so much more about it, who know by what they feel al-

ready, and know certainly, that whenever it comes they shall stand on the left hand of the Judge, to receive the dreadful sentence; and that then they, in both soul and body, must enter into those everlasting burnings which are prepared for the devil and his angels, and who probably know that their misery is to be a hundred fold greater than it is now.

3. Fearfulness will surprise them at the last judgment. When Christ shall appear in the clouds of heaven, and the last trumpet shall sound, then will the hearts of wicked men be surprised with fearfulness. The poor damned soul, in expectation of it, trembles every day and every hour from the time of its departure from the body. It knows not, indeed, when it is to be, but it knows it *is* to be. But when the alarm is given in hell, that the day is come, it will be a dreadful alarm indeed. It will, as it were, fill the caverns of hell with shrieks; and when the souls of the damned shall enter into their bodies, it will be with amazing horror of what is coming. And when they shall lift up their heads out of their graves, and shall see the Judge, it will be a most terrible sight. Gladly would they return into their graves again, and hide themselves there, if that might be; and gladly would they return into hell, their former state of misery, to hide themselves from this awful sight, if that would excuse them.

So those sinners in Zion, who shall then be found alive on the earth, when they shall see this sight, will be surprised with fearfulness. The fear and horror which many poor sinners feel when they are dying, is great, and beyond all that we can have any idea of; but that is nothing to the horror that will seize them when they shall come to see this sight.

There will not be a wicked man upon earth who will be able to bear it, let him be who he will, let him be rich or poor, old or young, male or female, servant or master, king or subject, learned or unlearned, let him be ever so proud, ever so courageous, and ever so sturdy. There is not one who will be able at all to support himself; when he shall see this sight, it will immediately sink his spirit; it will loose the joints of his loins; it will make his countenance more ghastly than death. The rich captains, and valiant generals and princes, who now scorn to show any fear at the face of any enemy, who scorn to tremble at the roaring of cannon, will tremble and shriek when they shall hear the last trumpet, and see the majesty of their Judge. It will make their teeth to chatter, and make them cry out, and fly to hide themselves in the caves and rocks of mountains, crying to the rocks and mountains to fall on them, and cover them from the wrath of the Judge.

Fearfulness will surprise them when they shall be dragged before the judgment seat. The wicked hang back when they are about to meet death; but in no measure as they will hang back when they come to meet their great Judge. And when they come to stand before the Judge, and are put on his left hand, fearfulness and amazement will surprise them. The majesty of the Judge will be intolerable to them. His pure and holy eye, which will behold and search them, and pierce them through, will be more terrible to their souls a thousand times than flashes of lightning piercing their hearts. There will they stand in a trembling expectation, that by and by they shall hear the words of that dreadful sentence proceed out of the mouth of Christ. They will have a horrible expectation of that sentence; and what shall they do, whither shall they fly, so as to be out of the hearing of it? They cannot shut their ears, so as not to hear it.

Fearfulness will surprise them when the sentence shall come to be pronounced. At the close of the judgment, that dreadful doom will be uttered by the Judge; and it will be the most terrible voice that ever was heard. The

sound of the last trumpet, that shall call men to judgment, will be a more terrible sound to wicked men than ever they shall have heard till that time. But the sound of the last sentence will be much more terrible than that. There will not be one of all those millions at the left hand, whether high or low, king or subject, who will be able to support himself at all under the sound of that sentence; but they will all sink under it.

Lastly, fearfulness will surprise them, when they shall come to see the fire kindle upon the world, in which they are to be tormented forever. When the sentence shall have been pronounced, Christ, with his blessed saints and glorious angels, will leave this lower world, and ascend into heaven. Then will the flames begin to kindle, and fire will probably be seen coming down from heaven; and soon will the fire lay hold of that accursed multitude. Then will their hearts be surprised with fearfulness; that fire will appear a dreadful fire indeed. O what chatterings of teeth, what shakings of loins, what distortions of body, will there be at that time, when they shall see, and begin to feel, the fierceness of the flames! What shall they do, whither shall they go, to avoid those flames? Where shall they hide themselves? If they creep into holes, or creep into caves of the earth, yea, if they could creep down to the centre of the earth, it will be in vain; for it will set on fire the bottoms of the mountains, and burn to the lowest hell. They will see no place to fly to, no place to hide themselves.

Then their hearts will be filled with fearfulness, and will utterly sink in despair. Thus it shall hereafter be with every one that shall then be found to be a sinner, and especially with sinners in Zion. I come now,

III. To consider those reasons spoken of in the text, why sinners in Zion will hereafter be thus surprised with fear.

1. Fearfulness will surprise them, because they will know that they are to be cast into devouring fire. There is nothing which seems to give one a more terrible idea of torment and misery, than to think of being cast alive into a fire; especially if we conceive of the senses remaining quick, and not benumbed by the fire. The wicked will hereafter have that to make them afraid, that they are not only to be cast into a fire, but into devouring fire; which implies, that it will be a fire of extraordinary fierceness of heat, and before which nothing can stand.

The fire into which men are to be cast is called a *furnace of fire.* Furnaces are contrived for an extreme degree of heat, this being necessary for the purposes for which they are designed, as the running and refining of metals, and the melting of things into glass. The fire of such earthly furnaces may be called *devouring fire*, as the heat of some of them is such, that in them even stones will presently be dissolved. Now, if a person should be brought to the mouth of such a furnace, and there should see how the fire glows, so as presently to make every thing cast into it, all over white and bright with fire, and at the same time should know that he was immediately to be cast into this furnace, would not fearfulness surprise him?

In some heathen countries, the manner of disposing of dead bodies is to dig a great pit, to put in it a great quantity of fuel, to put the dead bodies on the pile, and to set it on fire. This is some image of the burning of dead souls in the pit of hell. Now, if a person were brought to the edge of such a pit, all filled with glowing flames, to be immediately cast into it, would it not surprise the heart with fearfulness?

The flames of a very great fire, as when a house is all on fire, give one some idea of the fierceness of the wrath of God. Such is the rage of the flames.

And we see that the greater a fire is, the fiercer is its heat in every part; and the reason is, because one part heats another. The heat in a particular place, besides the heat which proceeds out of the fuel in that place, is increased by the additional heat of the fire all around it. Hence we may conceive something of what fierceness that fire will be, when this visible world shall be turned into one great furnace. That will be devouring fire indeed. Such will be the heat of it, that, as the apostle says, "the elements shall melt with fervent heat," 2 Pet. iii. 10.

Men can artificially raise such a degree of heat with burning glasses, as will quickly melt the very stones and sand. And it is probable that the heat of that great fire which will burn the world, will be such as to melt the rocks, and the very ground, and turn them into a kind of liquid fire. So that the whole world will probably be converted into a great lake, or liquid globe of fire, a vast ocean of fire, in which the wicked shall be overwhelmed. It will be an ocean of fire, which will always be in a tempest, in which the wicked shall be tossed to and fro, having no rest day nor night, vast waves or billows of fire continually rolling over their heads.

But all this will be only an image of that dreadful fire of the wrath of God, which the wicked shall at the same time suffer in their souls. We read in Rev. xix. 15, of "the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." This is an extraordinary expression, carrying a terrible idea of the future misery of the wicked. If it had been only said the wrath of God, that would have expressed what is dreadful. If the wrath of a king be as the roaring of a lion, what is the wrath of God? But it is not only said the wrath of God, but *the fierceness and wrath of God*, or the rage of his wrath; and not only so, but the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. O what is that! The fierceness and rage or fury of Omnipotence! Of a being of infinite strength! What an idea doth that give of the state of those worms that suffer the fierceness and wrath of such an Almighty Being! And is it any wonder that fearfulness surprises their hearts, when they see this about to be executed upon them?

2. Another reason given in the text, why fearfulness will hereafter surprise sinners, is, that they will be sensible that this devouring fire will be everlasting. If a man were brought to the mouth of a great furnace, to be cast into the midst of it, if at the same time he knew he should suffer the torment of it but for one minute, yet that minute would be so terrible to him, that fearfulness would surprise and astonish him. How much more, if he were to be cast into a fire so much fiercer, as the fire in which wicked men are hereafter to be tormented! How much more terrible would the minute's suffering be!

But if the thought of suffering this devouring fire for one minute would be enough to fill one with such surprising fearfulness, what fearfulness will seize them, when they shall know that they are to bear it, not for one minute, nor for one day, nor for one year, nor for one age, nor for two ages, nor for a hundred ages, nor for ten thousand or million ages, one after another, but forever and ever, without any end at all, and never, never to be delivered!

They shall know, that the fire itself will be everlasting fire, fire that shall never be quenched. Mark ix. 43, 44, "To go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." And they shall know that their torment in that fire never will have an end, Rev. xiv. 10, 11. They shall know that they shall forever be full of quick sense within and without; their heads, their eyes, their tongues, their hands, their feet, their loins, and their vitals, shall forever be full of glowing, melting fire, fierce enough to melt the very rocks and elements; and also that they shall eternally be full of the most quick and lively sense to feel the torment.

They shall know that they shall never cease restlessly to plunge and roll in that mighty ocean of fire. They shall know that those billows of fire, which are greater than the greatest mountains, will never cease to roll over them, are following one another forever and ever.

At the same time they will have a more lively sense of eternity than we ever can have here. We can have but a little sense of what an eternal duration is; and indeed none can comprehend it; it swallows up all thought and imagination: if we set ourselves to think upon it, we are presently lost. But they will have another and far clearer sense of it than we have. O how vast will eternity appear to them, when they think of spending it in such burnings! This is another reason that fearfulness will surprise them. The thoughts of eternity will always amaze them, and will sink and depress them to a bottomless depth of despair.

3. The third reason given in the text, why fearfulness will surprise them at the apprehension of this punishment, is, that they will know that they shall not be able to bear it. When they shall see themselves going into that devouring fire, they will know that they are not able to bear it. They will know that they are not able to grapple with the fierceness and rage of those flames; for they will see the fierceness of the wrath of God in them; they will see an awful manifestation of Omnipotence in the fury of that glowing furnace. And in those views their hearts will utterly fail them; their hands will not be strong, nor their hearts endure. They will see that their strength is weakness; they will know that they will not be able to grapple with such torments, and that they can do nothing in such a conflict.

When they shall have come to the edge of the pit, and of the burning lake, and shall look into the furnace, then they will cry out with exclamations like these; O! what shall I do? how shall I bear the torments of this fire? how can I endure them? who can endure? where is the man so stout-hearted, where is the giant of such strength and such courage, that he can bear this? O! what shall I do? must I be cast in thither? I cannot bear it; I can never endure it. O that I could return to my first nothing! how can I endure it one moment? how much less can I endure it forever and ever? and must I bear it forever? What! forever and ever, without any end, and never find any refuge, never be suffered to return to my first nothing, and be no nearer to the end of these sufferings after millions of ages? O what dismal shrieks, shaking of loins, and gnashing of teeth, will there be then! No wonder that fearfulness will then surprise the wicked. I come now,

IV. To show, why it will be especially thus with the sinners in Zion, or sinners that dwell among God's visible people, who sit under the preaching of the gospel, and have the offers of a Saviour, and yet accept not of him, but remain in an unconverted state.

There will hereafter be a very great difference between them and other sinners; a great difference between the most painted hypocrite of them all, and the drunkards, the adulterers, the Sodomites, the thieves, and murderers among the heathen, who sin against only the light of nature. The fearfulness which will surprise them, although it will be very dreadful, yet will be in no measure so amazing and horrible, as that which will seize the sinners in Zion. That fierceness and wrath of Almighty God, which they will suffer, will be mild and moderate in comparison with that which the sinners in Zion will suffer.

The wrath of God is in his word manifested against the wicked heathens; but it is ten times as much manifested against those sinners who make the profession and enjoy the privileges of the people of God; and yet remain enemies

to God. Both the Old Testament and the New are full of terrible denunciations against such. Read the books of Moses, and read the prophets, and you will find them full of dreadful threatenings against such. Read over the history of Christ's life, and the speeches which he made when upon earth; there you will see what woes and curses he frequently denounced against such. How often did he say, that it should be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for the cities in which most of his mighty works were done! Read over the history of the Acts of the Apostles, and their epistles; there you will find the same. It is the sinners in Zion, or hypocrites, that are always in Scripture spoken of as the people of God's wrath: Isa. x. 6, "I will send him against an hypocritical nation, against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil."

Now, the reasons of this are chiefly these:

1. That they sin against so much greater light. This is often spoken of in Scripture, as an aggravation to the sin and wickedness of sinners in Zion. He that knows not his Lord's will, and doeth it not, is declared not to be worthy of so many stripes, as he who, being informed of his Lord's will, is in like manner disobedient. If men be blind, they have comparatively no sin; but when they see, when they have light to know their duty, and to know their obligation, then their sin is great, John ix. 41. When the light that is in a man is darkness, how great is that darkness! And when men live in wickedness, in the midst of great light, that light is like to be the blackness of darkness indeed.

2. That they sin against such professions and vows. The heathens never pretended to be the worshippers of the true God. They never pretended to be Christ's disciples; they never came under any covenant obligations to be such. But this is not the case with sinners in Zion. Now, God highly resents falsehood and treachery. Judas, who betrayed Christ with a kiss, was a greater sinner, and much more the object of God's wrath, than Pilate, who condemned him to be crucified, and was his murderer.

3. That they sin against so much greater mercy. They have the infinite mercy of God, in giving his own Son, often set before them: they have the dying love of Christ represented to them: they have this mercy, this glorious Saviour, his blood and righteousness, often offered to them: they have a blessed opportunity to obtain salvation for their souls; a great price is put into their hands to this end: they have that precious treasure, the holy Scriptures, and enjoy Sabbaths, and sacraments, and the various means of grace: but all these means and advantages, these opportunities, offers, mercies, and invitations, they abuse, neglect, despise, and reject.

But there is no wrath like that which arises from mercy abused and rejected. When mercy is in this way turned into wrath, this is the fiercest wrath; in comparison with this other wrath is cool.

Sinners in Zion, besides their fall by the first Adam, have a fall also by the second: he is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, at which they stumble and fall; and there is no fall like this; the fall by the first Adam is light in comparison with it.

On these accounts, whenever we see the day of judgment, as every one of us shall see it, we shall easily distinguish between the sinners in Zion and other sinners, by their shriller cries, their louder, more bitter and dolorous shrieks, the greater amazement of their countenances, and the more dismal shaking of their limbs, and contortions of their bodies.

I shall conclude with an earnest EXHORTATION to sinners in Zion, now to fly from the devouring fire and everlasting burnings.

You sinners who are here present, you are the very persons spoken of in the text; you are the sinners in Zion. How many of these people of God's wrath are there sitting here and there in the seats of this house at this time? You have often been exhorted to fly from the wrath to come. This devouring fire, these everlasting burnings, of which we have been speaking, are the wrath to come. You hear to-day of this fire, of these burnings, and of that fearfulness which will seize and surprise sinners in Zion hereafter; and O what reason have you of thankfulness that you only hear of them, that you do not as yet feel them, and that they have not already taken hold of you! They are, as it were, following you, and coming nearer and nearer every day. Those fierce flames are, as it were, already kindled in the wrath of God; yea, the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God burn against you; it is ready for you: that pit is prepared for you, with fire and much wood, and the wrath of the Lord, as a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.

Lot was with great urgency hastened out of Sodom, and commanded to make haste, and fly for his life, and escape to the mountains, lest he should be consumed in those flames which burned up Sodom and Gomorrah. But that burning was a mere spark of that devouring fire, and those everlasting burnings of which you are in danger. Therefore improve the present opportunity.

Now, God is pleased again to pour out his Spirit upon us; and he is doing great things among us. God is indeed come again, the same great God who so wonderfully appeared among us some years ago, and who hath since, for our sins, departed from us, left us long in so dull and dead a state, and hath let sinners alone in their sins; so that there have been scarcely any signs to be seen of any such work as conversion: that same God is now come again; he is really come in like manner, and begins, as he did before, gloriously to manifest his mighty power, and the riches of his grace. He brings sinners out of darkness into marvellous light. He rescues poor captive souls out of the hands of Satan; he saves persons from the devouring fire; he plucks one and another as brands out of the burnings; he opens the prison doors, and knocks off their chains, and brings out poor prisoners; he is now working salvation among us from this very destruction of which you have now heard.

Now, now, then, is the time, now is the blessed opportunity to escape those everlasting burnings. Now God hath again set open the same fountain among us, and gives one more happy opportunity for souls to escape. Now he hath set open a wide door, and he stands in the door-way, calling and begging with a loud voice to the sinners of Zion: Come, saith he to me, come, fly from the wrath to come; here is a refuge for you; fly hither for refuge; lay hold on the hope set before you.

A little while ago, it was uncertain whether we should ever see such an opportunity again. If it had always continued as it hath been for five or six years past, almost all of you would surely have gone to hell; in a little time fearfulness would have surprised you, and you would have been cast into that devouring fire, and those everlasting burnings. But in infinite mercy God gives another opportunity; and blessed are your eyes, that they see it, if you did but know your own opportunity.

You have had your life spared through these six years past, to this very time, to another ou'pouring of the Spirit. What would you have done, if you had died before it came? How doleful would your case have been! But you have reason to bless God that it was not so, and that you are yet alive, and now again see a blessed day of grace. And will you not improve

it! Have you not so much love to your poor souls, as to improve such an opportunity as this?

Some, there is reason to think, have lately fled for refuge to Christ; and will you be willing to stay behind still, poor miserable captives, condemned to suffer forever in the lake of fire? Hereafter you will see those of your neighbors and acquaintance, who are converted, mounting up as with wings, with songs of joy, to meet their Lord; and if you remain unconverted, you at the same time will be surprised with fear, and horror will take hold of you, because of the devouring fire, and the everlasting burnings.

It is an awful thing to think of, that there are now some persons in this very congregation, here and there, in one seat and another, who will be the subjects of that very misery of which we have now heard, although it be so dreadful, although it be so intolerable, and although it be eternal! There are probably some now hearing this sermon, whom the rest of the congregation will, at the day of judgment, see among the devils, at the left hand of the Judge. They will see their frighted ghastly countenances; they will see them wring their hands, and gnash their teeth, shrieking and crying out.

Now we know not their names, we know not what seats they sit in, nor where to look for them, nor whom to pitch upon. But God knoweth their names, and now seeth and knoweth what they think, and how much they regard the warnings which are given them this day. We have not the least reason to suppose any other than that some of you will hereafter see others entering into glory with Christ, and saints, and angels, while you, with dreadful horror, shall see the fire begin to kindle about you. It may be, that the persons are now blessing themselves in their own hearts, and each one saying with himself, Well, I do not intend it shall be I. Every one here hopes to go to heaven; none would by any means miss of it. If any thought they should miss of it, they would be greatly amazed. But all will not go thither; it will undoubtedly be the portion of some to toss and tumble forever among the fiery billows of God's wrath.

It is not to be supposed, but that there are some here who will not be in earnest; let them have ever so good an opportunity to obtain heaven, they will not thoroughly improve it. Tell them of hell as often as you will, and set it out in as lively colors as you will, they will be slack and slothful; and they will never be likely to obtain heaven, while they are sleeping, and dreaming, and intending, and hoping. The wrath of God, which pursues them, will take them by the heels; hell, that follows after, will overtake them; fearfulness will surprise them, and a tempest will steal them away.

Nor is it to be supposed, that all who are now seeking will hold out; some will backslide; they will be unsteady. If now they seem to be pretty much engaged, it will not hold. Times will probably alter by and by, and they, having not obtained grace, there will be many temptations to backsliding, with which they will comply. The hearts of men are very unsteady; they are not to be trusted. Men cannot tell how to have patience to wait upon God; they are soon discouraged. Some that are now under convictions may lose them. Perhaps they will not leave off seeking salvation at once; but they will come to it by degrees. After a while, they will begin to hearken to excuses, not to be quite so constant in duty; they will begin to think that they need not be quite so strict; they will say to themselves, they see no hurt in such and such things; they see not but they may practise them without any, or to be sure great guilt. Thus giving way to temptations, and hearkening to excuses, they will by degrees lose their convictions, and become secure in sin.

There were some who were guilty of backsliding, the last time of the revival of religion among us. While the talk upon religious subjects was generally kept alive, they continued to seek; but when this began to abate, and they saw others less zealous than they had been, and especially when they saw some miscarriages of professors, they began to grow more careless, to seek less earnestly, and to plead these things as an excuse. And they are left behind still; they are to this day in a miserable condemned state, in danger of the devouring fire, and of everlasting burnings; in twice so dangerous a state as they were in before they were awakened; and God only knows what will become of them. And as it was then, so we dread it will be now.

Some who are now here present in a natural condition, are doubtless near death; they have not long to live in the world; and if they seek in a dull way, or if after they have sought for a while, they are guilty of backsliding, death will come upon them long enough before there will come such another opportunity. When they leave off seeking, it will not be without a design of seeking again some time or other; but death will be too quick for them. It is not the manner of death to wait upon men, while they take time to indulge their sloth, and gratify their lusts. When his appointed time comes, he will do his work. Will you put off in hopes of seeing another such time seven years hence? Alas! how many of those who are now in a natural condition may be in hell before another seven years shall have elapsed!

Therefore now let every one look to himself. It is for your own soul's salvation. If you be foolish, and will not hearken to counsel, will not improve the opportunity when it is given you, and will not enter into such an open door, you alone must bear it. If you shall miss this opportunity, and quench your convictions now, and there shall come another time of the outpouring of the Spirit, you will be far less likely to have any profit by it; as we see now God chiefly moves on the hearts of those who are very young, who are brought forward upon the stage of action since the last outpouring of the Spirit, who were not then come to years of so much understanding, and consequently not so much in the way of the influences of the Spirit. As those who were grown up, and had convictions then, and quenched them, the most of these are abundantly more hardened, and seem to be more passed over. So it will probably be with you hereafter, if you miss this opportunity, and quench the convictions of the Spirit which you have now.

As to you who had awakenings the last time of the outpouring of the Spirit, and have quenched them, and remain to this day in a natural condition, let me call upon you also now that God is giving you one more such opportunity If passing in impenitence through one such opportunity hath so hardened you, and hath been such a great disadvantage to you, how sad will your case be, if you shall now miss another! Will you not now thoroughly awake out of sleep, bestir yourselves for your salvation, and resolve now to begin again and never leave off more? Many fled for refuge from the devouring fire before, and you were left behind. Others have fled for refuge now, and still you are left behind; and will you always remain behind? Consider, can you dwell with devouring fire? Can you dwell with everlasting burnings? Shall children, babes and sucklings, go into the kingdom of God before you?

How will you hereafter bear to see them coming and sitting down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God, when yourselves are thrust out, and are surprised with fearfulness at the sight of that devouring fire, and those everlasting burnings, into which you are about to be cast? Take heed lest a like threatening be fulfilled upon you with that which we have in Numb

xiv. 22, 23: "Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles which I did in Egypt, and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; surely they shall not see the land which I sware unto their fathers; neither shall any of them that provoked me see it." Together with verse 31: "But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised."

SERMON XXXI.

GREAT CARE NECESSARY, LEST WE LIVE IN SOME WAY OF SIN.

PSALM CXXXIX. 23, 24.—Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

THIS psalm is a meditation on the omniscience of God, or upon his perfect view and knowledge of every thing, which the Psalmist represents by that perfect knowledge which God had of all his actions, his down-sitting and his uprising; and of his thoughts. so that he knew his thoughts afar off; and of his words, "There is not a word in my tongue," says the Psalmist, "but thou knowest it altogether." Then he represents it by the impossibility of fleeing from the divine presence, or of hiding from him; so that if he should go into heaven, or hide himself in hell, or fly to the uttermost parts of the sea; yet he would not be hid from God: or if he should endeavor to hide himself in darkness, yet that would not cover him; but the darkness and light are both alike to him.

Then he represents it by the knowledge which God had of him while in his mother's womb: verses 15, 16, "My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret; thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in thy book all my members were written."

After this the Psalmist observes what must be inferred as a necessary consequence of this omniscience of God, viz., that he will slay the wicked, since he seeth all their wickedness, and nothing of it is hid from him. And last of all, the Psalmist improves this meditation upon God's all-seeing eye, in begging of God that he would search and try him, to see if there were any wicked way in him, and lead him in the way everlasting.

Three things may be noted in the words.

1. The act of mercy which the Psalmist implores of God towards himself, viz, that God would search him: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts."

2. In what respect he desires to be searched, viz., "to see if there were any wicked way in him." We are not to understand by it, that the Psalmist means that God should search him for his own information. What he had said before, of God's knowing all things, implies that he hath no need of that. The Psalmist had said, in the second verse, that God understood his thought afar off; i. e., it was all plain before him, he saw it without difficulty, or without being forced to come nigh, and diligently to observe. That which is plain to be seen, may be seen at a distance.

Therefore, when the Psalmist prays that God would search him, to see if there were any wicked way in him, he cannot mean that he should search that he himself might see or be informed, but that the PSALMIST might see and be informed. He prays that God would search him by his discovering light; that he would lead him thoroughly to discern himself, and see whether there were any wicked way in him. Such figurative expressions are often used in Scripture. The word of God is said to be a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Not that the word itself discerns, but it searches and opens our hearts to view; so that it enables us to discern the temper and desires of

our hearts. So God is often said to TRY men. He doth not try them for his own information, but for the discovery and manifestation of them to themselves or others.

3. Observe to what end he thus desires God to search him, viz., "that he might be led in the way everlasting;" i. e., not only in a way which may have a specious show, and appear right to him for a while, and in which he may have peace and quietness for the present; but in the way which will hold, which will stand the test, which he may confidently abide by forever, and always approve of as good and right, and in which he may always have peace and joy. It is said, that "the way of the ungodly shall perish," Psalm i. 6. In opposition to this, the way of the righteous is in the text said TO LAST FOREVER.

DOCTRINE.

All men should be much concerned to know, whether they do not live in some way of sin.

David was much concerned to know this concerning himself: he searched himself, he examined his own heart and ways; but he did not trust to that; he was still afraid lest there might be some wicked way in him which had escaped his notice: therefore he cries to God to search him. And his earnestness appears in the frequent repetition of the same request in different words: *Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts.* He was very earnest to know whether there were not some evil way or other in him, in which he went on, and did not take notice of it.

1. We ought to be much concerned to know whether we do not live in a STATE OF SIN. All unregenerate men live in sin. We are born under the power and dominion of sin, are sold under sin; every unconverted sinner is a devoted servant to sin and Satan. We should look upon it as of the greatest importance to us, to know in what state we are, whether we ever had any change made in our hearts from sin to holiness, or whether we be not still in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity; whether ever sin were truly mortified in us; whether we do not live in the sin of unbelief, and in the rejection of the Saviour. This is what the apostle insists upon with the Corinthians: 2 Cor. xiii. 5, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves; know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"

Those who entertain the opinion and hope of themselves, that they are godly, should take great care to see that their foundation be right. Those that are in doubt should not give themselves rest till the matter be resolved.

Every unconverted person lives in a *sinful way.* He not only lives in a particular evil practice, but the whole course of his life is sinful. The imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually. He not only doth evil, but he doth no good: Psal. xiv. 3, "They are altogether become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no not one." Sin is an unconverted man's trade; it is the work and business of his life; for he is the servant of sin. And ordinarily hypocrites, or those who are wicked men, and yet think themselves godly, and make a profession accordingly, are especially odious and abominable to God.

2. We ought to be much concerned to know whether we do not live in some particular way which is offensive and displeasing to God: this is what I principally intend in the doctrine. We ought to be much concerned to know whether we do not live in the gratification of some lust, either in practice or in our thoughts; whether we do not live in the omission of some duty, some thing which God expects we should do: whether we do not go into some practice

or manner of behavior, which is not warrantable. We should inquire whether we do not live in some practice which is against our light, and whether we do not allow ourselves in known sins.

We should be strict to inquire whether or no we have not hitherto allowed ourselves in some or other sinful way, through wrong principles and mistaken notions of our duty: whether we have not lived in the practice of some things offensive to God through want of care, and watchfulness, and observation of ourselves. We should be concerned to know whether we live not in some way which doth not become the profession we make; and whether our practice in some things be not unbecoming Christians, contrary to Christian rules, not suitable for the disciples and followers of the Holy Jesus, the Lamb of God. We ought to be concerned to know this, because,

(1.) God requires of us, that we exercise the utmost watchfulness and diligence in his service. Reason teaches, that it is our duty to exercise the utmost care, that we may know the mind and will of God, and our duty in all the branches of it, and to use our utmost diligence in every thing to do it; because the service of God is the great business of our lives, it is that work which is the end of our being; and God is worthy, that we should serve him to the utmost of our power in all things. This is what God often expressly requires of us: Deut. iv. 9, "Take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things that thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life." And v. 15, 16, "Take ye therefore good heed to yourselves, lest ye corrupt yourselves." And Deut. vi. 17, "You shall diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your God, and his testimonies, and his statutes which he hath commanded thee." And Prov. iv. 23, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."

So we are commanded by Christ to *watch and pray*, Matt. xxvi. 41; and Luke xxi. 34, "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and the cares of this life." Eph. v. 15, "See that ye walk circumspectly."

So that if we be found in any evil way whatsoever, it will not excuse us, that it was through inadvertence, or that we were not aware of it; as long as it is through want of that care and watchfulness in us, which we ought to have maintained.

(2.) If we live in any way of sin, we live in a way whereby God is dishonored; but the honor of God ought to be supremely regarded by all. If every one would make it his great care in all things to obey God, to live justly and holily, to walk in every thing according to Christian rules; and would maintain a strict, watchful, and scrutinous eye over himself, to see if there were no wicked way in him; would give diligence to amend whatsoever is amiss; would avoid every unholy, unchristian, and sinful way; and if the practice of all were universally as becometh Christians, how greatly would this be to the glory of God, and of Jesus Christ! How greatly would it be to the credit and honor of religion! How would it tend to excite a high esteem of religion in spectators, and to recommend a holy life! How would it stop the mouths of objectors and opposers! How beautiful and amiable would religion then appear, when exemplified and holden forth in the lives of Christians, not maimed and mutilated, but whole and entire, as it were in its true shape, having all its parts and its proper beauty! Religion would then appear to be an amiable thing indeed.

If those who call themselves Christians generally, thus walked in all the paths of virtue and holiness, it would tend more to the advancement of the kingdom of Christ in the world, the conviction of sinners, and the propagation

of religion among unbelievers, than all the sermons in the world, so long as the lives of those who are called Christians are as they are now.

For want of this concern and watchfulness in the degree in which it ought to take place, many truly godly persons adorn not their profession as they ought to do, and, on the contrary, in some things dishonor it. For want of being so much concerned as they ought to be, to know whether they do not walk in some way that is unbecoming a Christian, and offensive to God; their behavior in some things is very unlovely, and such as is an offence and stumbling-block to others, and gives occasion to the enemy to blaspheme.

(3.) We should be much concerned to know whether we do not live in some way of sin, as we would regard our own interest. If we live in any way of sin, it will be exceedingly to our hurt. Sin, as it is the most hateful evil, it is that which is most prejudicial to our interest, and tends most to our hurt of any thing in the world. If we live in any way that is displeasing to God, it may be the ruin of our souls. Though men reform all other wicked practices, yet if they live in but one sinful way, which they do not forsake, it may prove their everlasting undoing.

If we live in any way of sin, we shall thereby provoke God to anger, and bring guilt upon our own souls. Neither will it excuse us, that we were not sensible how evil that way was in which we walked; that we did not consider it; that we were blind as to any evil in it. We contract guilt not only by living in those ways which we know, but in those which we might know to be sinful, if we were but sufficiently concerned to know what is sinful and what not, and to examine ourselves, and search our own hearts and ways. If we walk in some evil way, and know it not for want of watchfulness and consideration, that will not excuse us; for we ought to have watched and considered, and made the most diligent inquiry.

If we walk in some evil way, it will be a great prejudice to us in this world. We shall thereby be deprived of that comfort which we otherwise might enjoy, and shall expose ourselves to a great deal of soul trouble, and sorrow, and darkness, which otherwise we might have been free from. A wicked way is the original way of pain or grief. In it we shall expose ourselves to the judgments of God, even in this world; and we shall be great losers by it, in respect to our eternal interest; and that though we may not live in a way of sin wilfully, and with a deliberate resolution, but carelessly, and through the deceitfulness of our corruptions. However we shall offend God, and prevent the flourishing of grace in our hearts, if not the very being of it.

Many are very careful that they do not proceed in mistakes, where their temporal interest is concerned. They will be strictly careful that they be not led on blindfold in the bargains which they make; in their traffick one with another, they are careful to have their eyes about them, and to see that they go safely in these cases; and why not, where the interest of their souls is concerned?

(4.) We should be much concerned to know whether we do not live in some way of sin, because we are exceedingly prone to walk in some such way. The heart of man is naturally prone to sin; the weight of the soul is naturally that way, as the stone by its weight tendeth downwards. And there is very much of a remaining proneness to sin in the saints. Though sin be mortified in them, yet there is a body of sin and death remaining; there are all manner of lusts and corrupt inclinations. We are exceeding apt to get into some ill path or other. Man is so prone to sinful ways, that without maintaining a constant, strict watch over himself, no other can be expected than that he will walk in some way of sin.

Our hearts are so full of sin, that they are ready to betray us. That to which men are prone, they are apt to get into before they are aware. Sin is apt to steal in upon us unawares. Besides this, we live in a world where we continually meet with temptations; we walk in the midst of snares; and the devil, a subtle adversary, is continually watching over us, endeavoring, by all manner of wiles and devices, to lead us astray into by-paths. 2 Cor. xi. 2, 8, "I am jealous over you. I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety; so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." 1 Pet. v. 8, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." These things should make us the more jealous of ourselves.

(5.) We ought to be concerned to know whether we do not live in some way of sin; because there are many who live in such ways, and do not consider it, or are not sensible of it. It is a thing of great importance that we should know it, and yet the knowledge is not to be acquired without difficulty. Many live in ways which are offensive to God, who are not sensible of it. They are strangely blinded in this case. Psal. xix. 12, "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults." By secret faults, the Psalmist means those which are secret to himself, those sins which were in him, or which he was guilty of, and yet was not aware of.

That the knowing whether we do not live in some way of sin is attended with difficulty, is not because the rules of judging in such a case are not plain or plentiful. God hath abundantly taught us what we ought, and what we ought not to do; and the rules by which we are to walk are often set before us in the preaching of the word. So that the difficulty of knowing whether there be any wicked way in us, is not for want of external light, or for want of God's having told us plainly and abundantly what are wicked ways. But that many persons live in ways which are displeasing to God, and yet are not sensible of it, may arise from the following things.

1. From the blinding, deceitful nature of sin. The heart of man is full of sin and corruption, and that corruption is of an exceeding darkening, blinding nature. Sin always carries a degree of darkness with it; and the more it prevails, the more it darkens and deludes the mind. It is from hence that the knowing whether there be any wicked way in us, is a difficult thing. The difficulty is not at all for want of light without us, not at all because the word of God is not plain, or the rules not clear; but it is because of the darkness within us. The light shines clear enough around us, but the fault is in our eyes; they are dim, are darkened and blinded by a pernicious distemper.

Sin is of a deceitful nature, because, so far as it prevails, so far it gains the inclination and will, and that sways and biasses the judgment. So far as any lust prevails, so far it biasses the mind to approve of it. So far as any sin sways the inclination or will, so far that sin seems pleasing and good to the man. And that which is pleasing, the mind is prejudiced to think is right. Hence when any lust hath so gained upon a man, as to get him into a sinful way or practice; it having gained his will, also prejudices his understanding. And the more irregularly a man walks, the more will his mind probably be darkened and blinded; because by so much the more doth sin prevail.

Hence many men who live in ways which are not agreeable to the rules of God's word, yet are not sensible of it; and it is a difficult thing to make them sensible of it; because the same lust that leads them into that evil way, blinds them in it. Thus, if a man live in a way of malice or envy, the more malice or envy prevails, the more will it blind his understanding to approve of it. The

more a man hates his neighbor, the more will he be disposed to think that he has just cause to hate him, and that his neighbor is hateful, and deserves to be hated, and that it is not his duty to love him. So if a man live in any way of lasciviousness, the more his impure lust prevails, the more sweet and pleasant will it make the sin appear, and so the more will he be disposed and prejudiced to think there is no evil in it.

So the more a man lives in a way of covetousness, or the more inordinately he desires the profits of the world, the more will he think himself excusable in so doing, and the more will he think that he has a necessity of those things, and cannot do without them. And if they be necessary, then he is excusable for eagerly desiring them. The same might be shown of all the lusts which are in men's hearts. By how much the more they prevail, by so much more do they blind the mind, and dispose the judgment to approve of them. All lusts are deceitful lusts. Eph. iv. 22, "That ye put off, concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the *deceitful lusts*." And even godly men may for a time be blinded and deluded by a lust, so far as to live in a way which is displeasing to God.

The lusts of men's hearts, prejudicing them in favor of sinful practices, to which those lusts tend, and in which they delight; this stirs up carnal reason, and puts men, with all the subtlety of which they are capable, to invent pleas and arguments to justify such practices. When men are very strongly inclined and tempted to any wicked practice, and conscience troubles them about it, they will rack their brains to find out arguments to stop the mouth of conscience, and to make themselves believe that they may lawfully proceed in that practice.

When men have entered upon an ill practice, and proceeded in it, then their self-love prejudices them to approve of it. Men do not love to condemn themselves; they are prone to flatter themselves, and are prejudiced in their own favor, and in favor of whatever is found in themselves. Hence they will find out good names, by which to call their evil dispositions and practices; they will make them virtuous, or at least will make them innocent. Their covetousness they will call prudence and diligence in business. If they rejoice at another's calamity, they pretend it is because they hope it will do him good, and will humble him. If they indulge in excessive drinking, it is because their constitutions require it. If they talk against, and backbite their neighbor, they call it zeal against sin; it is because they would bear a testimony against such wickedness. If they set up their wills to oppose others in public affairs, then they call their wilfulness conscience, or respect to the public good. Thus they find good names for all their evil ways.

Men are very apt to bring their principles to their practices, and not their practices to their principles, as they ought to do. They, in their practice, comply not with their consciences; but all their strife is to bring their consciences to comply with their practice

On the acconnt of this deceitfulness of sin, and because we have so much sin dwelling in our hearts, it is a difficult thing to pass a true judgment on our own ways and practices. On this account we should make diligent search, and be much concerned to know whether there be not some wicked way in us. Heb. iii 12, 13, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

Men can more easily see faults in others than they can in themselves. When they see others out of the way, they will presently condemn them, when perhaps they do, or have done the same, or the like themselves, and in themselves

justify it. Men can discern motes in others' eyes, better than they can beams in their own. Prov. xxi. 2, "Every way of man is right in his own eyes." The heart in this matter is exceedingly deceitful. Jer. xvii. 9, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" We ought not therefore to trust in our own hearts in this matter, but to keep a jealous eye on ourselves, to be prying into our own hearts and ways, and to cry to God that he would search us. Prov. xxviii. 26, "He that trusteth his own heart is a fool."

2. Satan also sets in with our deceitful lusts, and labors to blind us in this matter. He is continually endeavoring to lead us into sinful ways, and sets in with carnal reason to flatter us in such ways, and to blind the conscience. He is the prince of darkness; he labors to blind and deceive; it hath been his work ever since he began it with our first parents.

3. Sometimes men are not sensible, because they are stupified through custom. Custom in an evil practice stupifies the mind, so that it makes any way of sin, which at first was offensive to conscience, after a while, to seem harmless.

4. Sometimes persons live in ways of sin, and are not sensible of it, because they are blinded by common custom, and the examples of others. There are so many who go into the practice, and it is so common a custom, that it is esteemed little or no discredit to a man; it is little testified against. This causes some things to appear innocent, which are very displeasing to God, and abominable in his sight. Perhaps we see them practised by those of whom we have a high esteem, by our superiors, and those who are accounted wise men. This greatly prepossesses the mind in favor of them, and takes off the sense of their evil. Or if they be observed to be commonly practised by those who are accounted godly men, men of experience in religion, this tends greatly to harden the heart, and blind the mind with respect to any evil practice.

5. Persons are in great danger of living in ways of sin, and not being sensible of it, for want of duly regarding and considering their duty in the full extent of it. There are some who hear of the necessity of reforming from all sins, and attending all duties, and will set themselves to perform some particular duties, at the same time neglecting others. Perhaps their thoughts will be wholly taken up about religious duties, such as prayer in secret, reading the Scriptures, and other good books, going to public worship and giving diligent attention, keeping the Sabbath, and serious meditation. They seem to regard these things, as though they comprised their duty in its full extent, as if this were their whole work; and moral duties towards their neighbors, their duties in the relations in which they stand, their duties as husbands or wives, as brethren or sisters, or their duties as neighbors, seem not to be considered by them.

They consider not the necessity of those things: and when they hear of earnestly seeking salvation in a way of diligent attendance on all duties, they seem to leave those out of their thoughts, as if they were not meant; nor any other duties, except reading, and praying, and keeping the Sabbath, and the like. Or if they do regard some parts of their moral duty, it may be other branches of it are not considered. Thus if they be just in their dealings, yet perhaps they neglect deeds of charity. They know they must not defraud their neighbor; they must not lie; they must not commit uncleanness; but seem not to consider what an evil it is to talk against others lightly, or to take up a reproach against them, or to contend and quarrel with them, or to live contrary to the rules of the gospel in their family relations, or not to instruct their children or servants.

Many men seem to be very conscientious in some things, in some branches

of their duty on which they keep their eye, when other important branches are entirely neglected, and seem not to be noticed by them. They regard not their duty in the full extent of it.

APPLICATION.

The use I shall make of this doctrine is, to stir up in you the concern of which I have been speaking, and to lead you to a strict inquiry, whether you do not live in some way of sin.

1. I shall propose some directions for you to follow, that you may discover whether you do not live in some way of sin.

2. I shall mention some particulars, concerning which you may examine yourselves, in order to know whether you do not live in some way of sin.

3. I shall mention some things which show the importance of knowing and forsaking the ways of sin in which you live.

1. I shall show what method you ought to take, in order to find out whether you do not live in some way of sin. This, as hath been observed, is a difficult thing to be known; but it is not a matter of so much difficulty, but that if persons were sufficiently concerned about it, and strict and thorough in inquiring and searching, it might, for the most part, be discovered; men might know whether they live in any way of sin, or not. Persons who are deeply concerned to please and obey God, need not, under the light we enjoy, go on in ways of sin, through ignorance. It is true, that our hearts are exceedingly deceitful; but God, in his holy word, hath given that light with respect to our duty, which is accommodated to the state of darkness in which we are. So that by thorough care and inquiry, we may know our duty, and know whether or no we live in any sinful way. And every one who hath any true love to God and his duty, will be glad to have any assistance in this inquiry. It is with such persons a concern which lies with much weight upon their spirits, in all things to walk as God would have them, and so as to please and honor him. If they live in any way which is offensive to God, they will be glad to know it, and do by no means choose to have it concealed from them.

All those also, who in good earnest make the inquiry, *What shall I do to be saved?* will be glad to know whether they do not live in some sinful way of behavior. For if they live in any such way, it is a great disadvantage to them with respect to that great concern. It behooves every one who is seeking salvation, to know and avoid every sinful way in which he lives. The means by which we must come to the knowledge of this, are two, viz., the knowledge of the rule, and the knowledge of ourselves.

1st. If we would know whether we do not live in some way of sin, we should take a great deal of pains to be thoroughly acquainted with the rule. God hath given us a true and perfect rule by which we ought to walk. And that we might be able, notwithstanding our darkness, and the disadvantages which attend us, to know our duty; he hath laid the rule before us abundantly. What a full and abundant revelation of the mind of God have we in the Scriptures! And how plain is it in what relates to practice! How often are rules repeated! In how many various forms are they revealed, that we might the more fully understand them!

But to what purpose will all this care of God to inform us be, if we neglect the revelation which God hath made of his mind, and take no care to become acquainted with it? It is impossible that we should know whether we do not live in a way of sin, unless we know the rule by which we are to walk. The

sinfulness of any way consists in its disagreement from the rule; and we can not know whether it agree with the rule or nor not, unless we be acquaint ed with the rule. Rom iii. 20, "By the law is the knowledge sin."

Therefore, lest we go in ways displeasing to God, we ought with the greatest diligence to study the rules which God hath given us. We ought to read and search the Holy Scriptures much, and to do it with the design to know the whole of our duty, and in order that the word of God may be "a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our paths," Psalm cxix. 105. Every one ought to strive to get knowledge in divine things, and to grow in such knowledge, to the end that he may know his duty, and know what God would have him to do.

These things being so, are not the greater part of men very much to blame in that they take no more pains or care to acquire the knowledge of divine things? In that they no more study the Holy Scriptures, and other books which might inform them? As if it were the work of ministers only, to take pains to acquire this knowledge. But why is it so much a minister's work to strive after knowledge, unless it be, that others may acquire knowledge by him? Will not many be found inexcusable in the sinful ways in which they live through ignorance and mistake, because their ignorance is a wilful, allowed ignorance? They are ignorant of their duty, but it is their own fault that they are so; they have advantages enough to know, and may know it if they will; but they take no pains to acquire knowledge in such things. They are careful to acquire knowledge, and to be well skilled in their outward affairs, upon which their temporal interest depends; but will not take pains to know their duty.

We ought to take great pains to be well informed, especially in those things which relate to our particular cases.

2dly. The other means is the knowledge of ourselves, as subject to the rule. If we would know whether we do not live in some way of sin, we should take the utmost care to be well acquainted with ourselves, as well as with the rule, that we may be able to compare ourselves with the rule. When we have found what the rule is, then we should be strict in examining ourselves, whether or no we be conformed to the rule. This is the direct way in which our characters are to be discovered. It is one thing wherein man differs from brute creatures, that he is capable of self-reflection, or of reflecting upon his own actions, and what passes in his own mind, and considering the nature and quality of them. And doubtless it was partly for this end that God gave us this power, which is denied to other creatures, that we might know ourselves, and consider our own ways.

We should examine our hearts and ways, until we have satisfactorily discovered either their agreement or disagreement with the rules of Scripture. This is a matter that requires the utmost diligence, lest we overlook our own irregularities, lest some evil way in us should lie hid under a disguise, and pass unobserved. One would think we are under greater advantages to be acquainted with ourselves, than with any thing else; for we are always present with ourselves, and have an immediate consciousness of our own actions: all that passeth in us, or is done by us, is immediately under our eye. Yet really in some respects the knowledge of nothing is so difficult to be obtained, as the knowledge of ourselves. We should therefore use great diligence in prying into the secrets of our hearts, and in examining all our ways and practices. That you may the more successfully use those means to know whether you do not live in some way of sin; be advised,

1. Evermore to join self-reflection with reading and hearing the word of God When you read or hear, reflect on yourselves as you go along, comparing yourselves and your own ways with what you read and hear. Reflect and consider what agreement or disagreement there is between the word and your ways. The Scriptures testify against all manner of sin, and contain directions for every duty; as the apostle saith, 2 Tim. iii. 16, "And is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." Therefore when you there read the rules given us by Christ and his apostles, reflect and consider. each one of you with himself, Do I live according to this rule? Or do I live in any respect contrary to it?

When you read in the historical parts of Scripture an account of the sins of which others have been guilty, reflect on yourselves as you go along, and inquire whether you do not in some degree live in the same or like practices. When you there read accounts how God reproved the sins of others and executed judgments upon them for their sins, examine whether you be not guilty of things of the same nature. When you read the examples of Christ, and of the saints recorded in Scripture, inquire whether you do not live in ways contrary to those examples. When you read there how God commended and rewarded any persons for their virtues and good deeds, inquire whether you perform those duties for which they were commended and rewarded, or whether you do not live in the contrary sins or vices. Let me further direct you, particularly to read the Scriptures to these ends, that you may compare and examine yourselves in the manner now mentioned.

So if you would know whether you do not live in some way of sin, whenever you hear any sin testified against, or any duty urged, in the preaching of the word, be careful to look back upon yourselves, to compare yourselves and your own ways with what you hear, and strictly examine yourselves, whether you live in this or the other sinful way which you hear testified against; and whether you do this duty which you hear urged. Make use of the word as a glass, wherein you may behold yourselves.

How few are there who do this as they ought to do! Who, while the minister is testifying against sin, are busy with themselves in examining their own hearts and ways! The generality rather think of others, how this or that person lives in a manner contrary to what is preached; so that there may be hundreds of things delivered in the preaching of the word, which properly belong to them, and are well suited to their cases; yet it never so much as comes into their minds, that what is delivered any way concerns them. Their minds readily fix upon others, and they can charge others, but never think with themselves whether or no they be the persons.

2. If you live in any ways which are generally condemned by the better, and more sober sort of men, be especially careful to inquire concerning these, whether they be not ways of sin. Perhaps you have argued with yourselves, that such or such a practice is lawful; you cannot see any evil in it. However, if it be generally condemned by godly ministers, and the better and more pious sort of people, it certainly looks suspiciously, whether or no there be not some evil in it; so that you may well be put upon inquiring with the utmost strictness, whether it be not sinful. The practice being so generally disapproved of by those who in such cases are most likely to be in the right, may reasonably put you upon more than ordinarily nice and diligent inquiry concerning the lawfulness or unlawfulness of it.

3. Examine yourselves, whether all the ways in which you live, are likely to be pleasant to think of upon a death-bed. Persons often in health allow and

plead for those things, which they would not dare to do, if they looked upon themselves as shortly about to go out of the world. They in a great measure still their consciences as to ways in which they walk, and keep them pretty easy, while death is thought of as at a distance: yet reflections on these same ways are very uncomfortable when they are going out of the world. Conscience is not so easily blinded and muffled then as at other times.

Consider therefore and inquire diligently whether or no you do not live in some practice or other, as to the lawfulness of which, when it shall come into your minds upon your death-bed, you will choose to have some further satisfaction, and some better argument than you now have, to prove that it is not sinful, in order to your being easy about it. Think over your particular ways, and try yourselves, with the awful expectation of soon going out of the world into eternity, and earnestly endeavor impartially to judge what ways you will on a death-bed approve of, and rejoice in, and what you will disapprove of, and wish you had let alone.

4. Be advised to consider what others say of you, and improve it to this end, to know whether you do not live in some way of sin. Although men are blind to their own faults, yet they easily discover the faults of others, and are apt enough to speak of them. Sometimes persons live in ways which do not at all become them, yet are blind to it themselves, not seeing the deformity of their own ways, while it is most plain and evident to others. They themselves cannot see it, yet others cannot shut their eyes against it, cannot avoid seeing it.

For instance. Some persons are of a very proud behavior, and are not sensible of it; but it appears notorious to others. Some are of a very worldly spirit, they are set after the world, so as to be noted for it, so as to have a name for it; yet they seem not to be sensible of it themselves. Some are of a very malicious and envious spirit; and others see it, and to them it appears very hateful; yet they themselves do not reflect upon it. Therefore since there is no trusting to our own hearts, and our own eyes in such cases, we should make our improvement of what others say of us, observe what they charge us with, and what fault they find with us, and strictly examine whether there be not foundation for it.

If others charge us with being proud; or worldly, close, and niggardly; or spiteful and malicious; or with any other ill temper or practice; we should improve it in self-reflection, to inquire whether it be not so. And though the imputation may seem to us to be very groundless, and we think that they, in charging us so and so, are influenced by no good spirit; yet if we act prudently, we shall take so much notice of it as to make it an occasion of examining ourselves.

Thus we should improve what our friends say to us and of us, when they, from friendship, tell us of any thing which they observe amiss in us. It is most imprudent, as well as most unchristian, to take it amiss, and resent it ill, when we are thus told of our faults: we should rather rejoice in it, that we are shown the spots which are upon us. Thus also we should improve what our enemies say of us. If they, from an ill spirit, reproach and revile us to our faces, we should consider it, so far as to reflect inwardly upon ourselves, and inquire whether it be not so, as they charge us. For though what is said, be said in a reproachful, reviling manner; yet there may be too much truth in it When men revile others even from an ill spirit towards them; yet they are likely to fix upon real faults; they are likely to fall upon us where we are weakest and most defective, and where we have given them most occasion. An enemy will soonest attack us where we can least defend ourselves; and a man that reviles us, though he do it from an unchristian spirit, and in an unchristian manner, yet

will be most likely to speak of that, for which we are really most to blame, and are most faulted by others.

So when we hear of others talking against us behind our backs, though they do very ill in so doing, yet the right improvement of it will be, to reflect upon ourselves, and consider whether we indeed have not those faults which they lay to our charge. This will be a more Christian and a more wise improvement of it, than to be in a rage, to revile again, and to entertain an ill will towards them for their evil speaking. This is the most wise and prudent improvement of such things. Hereby we may get good out of evil; and this is the surest way to defeat the designs of our enemies in reviling and backbiting us. They do it from ill will, and to do us an injury; but in this way we may turn it to our own good.

5. Be advised, when you see others' faults, to examine whether there be not the same in yourselves. This is not done by many, as is evident from this, that they are so ready to speak of others' faults, and aggravate them, when they have the very same themselves. Thus, nothing is more common than for proud men to accuse others of pride, and to declaim against them upon that account. So it is common for dishonest men to complain of being wronged by others. When a person seeth ill dispositions and practices in others, he is not under the same disadvantage in seeing their odiousness and deformity, as when he looks upon any ill disposition or practice in himself. He can see how odious these and those things are in others; he can easily see what a hateful thing pride is in another; and so of malice, and other evil dispositions or practices. In others he can easily see their deformity; for he doth not look through such a deceitful glass, as when he sees the same things in himself.

Therefore, when you see others' faults; when you take notice, how such a one acts amiss, what an ill spirit he shows, and how unsuitable his behavior is; when you hear others speak of it, and when you yourselves find fault with others in their dealings with you, or in things wherein you are any way concerned with them; then reflect, and consider, whether there be nothing of the same nature in yourselves. Consider that these things are just as deformed and hateful in you as they are in others. Pride, a haughty spirit and carriage, are as odious in you as they are in your neighbor. Your malicious and revengeful spirit towards your neighbor, is just as hateful as a malicious and revengeful spirit in him towards you. It is as unreasonable for you to wrong, and to be dishonest with your neighbor, as it is for him to wrong and be dishonest with you. It is as injurious and unchristian for you to talk against others behind their backs, as it is for others to do the same with respect to you.

6. Consider the ways in which others are blinded as to the sins in which they live, and strictly inquire whether you be not blinded in the same ways. You are sensible that others are blinded by their lusts; consider whether the prevalence of some carnal appetite or lust of the mind have not blinded you. You see how others are blinded by their temporal interest; inquire whether your temporal interest do not blind you also in some things, so as to make you approve of things, and allow yourselves in things which are not right. You are as liable to be blinded through inclination and interest, and have the same deceitful and wicked hearts as other men: Prov. xxvii. 19, "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man."

II. I proceed now to the SECOND thing proposed in the use of the doctrine, viz., to mention some particulars as to which it becomes you to examine yourselves, that you may know whether you do not live in some way of sin. I desire all those would strictly examine themselves in the following particulars,

who are concerned not to live in any way of sin, as I hope there are a considerable number of such now present; and this certainly will be the case with all who are godly, and all who are duly concerned for their own salvation.

1. Examine yourselves with respect to the Sabbath day, whether you do not live in some way of breaking or profaning God's holy Sabbath. Do you strictly in all things keep this day, as sacred to God, in governing your thoughts, words, and actions, as the word of God requires on this holy day? Inquire whether you do not only fail in PARTICULARS, but whether you do not live in some WAY, whereby this day is profaned; and particularly inquire concerning three things.

(1.) Whetner it be not a frequent thing with you to encroach upon the Sabbath at its beginning,* and after the Sabbath is begun to be out at your work, or following that worldly business which is proper to be done only in our own time. If this be a thing in which you allow yourselves, you live in a way of sin; for it is a thing which can by no means be justified. You have no more warrant to be out with your team, or to be cutting wood, or doing any other worldly business, immediately after the Sabbath is begun, than you have to do it in the middle of the day. The time is as holy near the beginning of the Sabbath as it is in the middle; it is the whole that we are to rest, and to keep holy, and devote to God; we have no license to take any part of it to our selves.

When men often thus encroach upon the Sabbath, it cannot be from any necessity which can justify them; it can only be for want of due care, and due regard to holy time. They can with due care get their work finished, so that they can leave it by a certain hour. This is evident by this, that when they are under a natural necessity of finishing their work by a certain time, then they do take that care as to have done before that time comes: as for instance, when they are aware that at such a time it will be dark, and they will not be able to follow their work any longer, but will be under a natural necessity of leaving off; why, then, they will and do take care ordinarily to have finished their work before that time; and this although the darkness sometimes begins sooner, and sometimes later.

This shows, that with due care men can ordinarily have done their work by a limited time. If proper care will finish their work by a limited time when they are under a natural necessity of it, the same care would as well finish it by a certain time when we are only under a moral necessity. If it were so, that men knew that as soon as ever the Sabbath should begin, it would be perfectly dark, so that they would be under a natural necessity of leaving off their work abroad by that time, then we should see that they would generally have their work done before the time. This shows that it is only for want of care, and of regard to the holy command of God, that men so frequently have some of their work abroad to do after the Sabbath is begun.

Nehemiah took great care that no burden should be borne after the beginning of the Sabbath: Nehem. xiii. 19, "And it came to pass, that when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the Sabbath," i. e., began to be darkened by the shade of the mountains before sunset, "I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the Sabbath; and some of my servants set I at the gates, that there should be no burden brought in on the Sabbath day."

* It may be necessary here to inform some readers, that it was the sentiment of the author, as well as of the country in general where he lived, that the Sabbath begins with the evening preceding the day, and is to be *celebrated from evening to evening*, Lev. xxiii. 32.

(2.) Examine whether it be not your manner to talk on the Sabbath of things unsuitable for holy time. If you do not move such talk yourselves, yet when you fall into company that sets you the example, are you not wont to join in diverting talk, or in talk of worldly affairs, quite wide from any relation to the business of the day? There is as much reason that you should keep the Sabbath holy with your tongues, as with your hands. If it be unsuitable for you to employ your hands about common and worldly things, why is it not as unsuitable for you to employ your tongues about them?

(3.) Inquire whether it be not your manner to loiter away the time of the Sabbath, and to spend it in a great measure in idleness, in doing nothing. Do you not spend more time on Sabbath day, than on other days, in your beds, or otherwise idling away the time, not improving it as a precious opportunity of seeking God, and your own salvation?

2. Examine yourselves, whether you do not live in some way of sin with respect to the institutions of God's house. Here I shall mention several instances.

(1.) Do you not wholly neglect some of those instructions, as particularly the sacrament of the Lord's Supper? Perhaps you pretend scruples of conscience, that you are not fit to come to that ordinance, and question whether you be commanded to come. But are your scruples the result of a serious and careful inquiry? Are they not rather a cloak for your own negligence, indolence, and thoughtlessness concerning your duty? Are you satisfied, have you thoroughly inquired and looked into this matter? If not, do you not live in sin, in that you do not more thoroughly inquire? Are you excusable in neglecting a positive institution, when you are scrupulous about your duty, and yet do not thoroughly inquire what it is?

But be it so, that you are unprepared, is not this your own sin, your own fault? And can sin excuse you from attending on a positive institution of Christ?

When persons are like to have children to be baptized, they can be convinced that it is their duty to come. If it be only conscience that detained them, why doth it not detain them as well now as heretofore? Or if they now be more thorough in their inquiries concerning their duty, ought they not to have been thorough in their inquiries before as well as now?

(2.) Do you not live in sin, in living in the neglect of singing God's praises? If singing praises to God be an ordinance of God's public worship, as doubtless it is, then it ought to be attended and performed by the whole worshipping assembly. If it be a command that we should worship God in this way, then all ought to obey this command, not only by joining with others in singing, but in singing themselves. For if we suppose it answers the command of God for us only to join in our hearts with others, it will run us into this absurdity, that *all* may do so; and then there would be none to sing, none for others to join with.

If it be an appointment of God, that Christian congregations should sing praises to him, then doubtless it is the duty of *all;* if there be no exception in the rule, then all ought to comply with it, unless they be incapable of it, or unless it would be a hinderance to the other work of God's house, as the case may be with ministers, who sometimes may be in great need of that respite and intermission after public prayers, to recover their breath and strength, so that they may be fit to speak the word. But if persons be now not capable, because they know not how to sing, that doth not excuse them, unless they have been incapable of learning. As it is the command of God, that all should sing, so

all should make conscience of learning to sing, as it is a thing which cannot be decently performed at all without learning. Those, therefore, who neglect to learn to sing, live in sin, as they neglect what is necessary in order to their attending one of the ordinances of God's worship.

Not only should persons make conscience of learning to sing themselves, but parents should conscientiously see to it, that their children are taught this among other things, as their education and instruction belong to them.

(3.) Are you not guilty of allowing yourselves in sin, in neglecting to do your part towards the removal of scandals from among us? All persons that are in the church, and the children of the church, are under the watch of the church; and it is one of those duties to which we are bound by the covenant which we either actually or virtually make, in uniting ourselves to a particular church, that we will watch over our brethren, and do our part to uphold the ordinances of God in their purity. This is the end of the institution of particular churches, viz., the maintaining of the ordinances of divine worship there, in the manner which God hath appointed.

Examine whether you have not allowed yourselves in sin with respect to this matter, through fear of offending your neighbors. Have you not allowedly neglected the proper steps for removing scandals, when you have seen them; the steps of reproving them privately, where the case would allow of it, and of telling them to the church, where the case required it? Instead of watching over your brother, have you not rather hid yourselves, that you might not be witnesses against him? And when you have seen scandal in him, have you not avoided the taking of proper steps according to the case?

(4.) Art not thou one whose manner it is, to come late to the public worship of God, and especially in *winter*, when the weather is cold? And dost thou not live in sin in so doing? Consider whether it be a way which can be justified; whether it be a practice which doth honor to God and religion; whether it have not the appearance of setting light by the public worship and ordinances of God's house. Doth it not show that thou dost not prize such opportunities, and that thou art willing to have as little of them as thou canst? Is it not a disorderly practice? And if all should do as thou dost, what confusion would it occasion?

(5.) Art thou not one whose manner it commonly is to sleep in the time of public service? And is not this to live in a way of sin? Consider the matter rationally; is it a thing to be justified, for thee to lay thyself down to sleep, while thou art present in the time of divine service, and pretendest to be one of the worshipping assembly, and to be hearing a message from God? Would it not be looked upon as a high affront, an odious behavior, if thou shouldst do so in the presence of a king, while a message was delivering to thee, in his name, by one of his servants? Canst thou put a greater contempt on the message which the King of kings sendeth to thee, concerning things of the greatest importance, than from time to time to lay thyself down, and compose thyself to sleep, while the messenger is delivering his message to thee?

(6.) Art thou not one who is not careful to keep his mind intent upon what is said and done in public worship? Dost thou not, in the midst of the most solemn acts of worship, suffer thy thoughts to rove after worldly objects, worldly cares and concerns, or perhaps the objects of thy wicked lusts and desires? And dost thou not herein live in a way of sin?

3. The next thing I shall propose to you to examine yourselves about, is, whether you do not live in some secret sin; whether you do not live in the neglect of some secret duty, or secretly live in some practice which is offensive

to the pure and all-seeing eye of God. Here you should examine yourselves concerning all secret duties, as reading, meditation, secret prayer; whether you attend those at all, or if you do, whether you do not attend them in an unsteady and careless manner. You should also examine yourselves concerning all secret sins. Strictly inquire what your behavior is, when you are hid from the eye of the world, when you are under no other restraints than those of conscience, when you are not afraid of the eye of man, and have nothing to fear but the all-seeing eye of God.

Here, among many other things which might be mentioned, I shall particularly mention two.

(1.) Inquire whether you do not live in the neglect of the duty of reading the holy Scriptures. The holy Scriptures were surely written to be read; and unless we be *Popish* in our principles, we shall maintain, that they were not only given to be read by ministers, but by the people too. It doth not answer the design for which they were given, that we have once read them, and that we once in a great while read something in them. They were given to be always with us, to be continually conversed with, as a rule of life. As the artificer must always have his rule with him in his work; and the blind man that walks must always have his guide by him; and he that walks in darkness must have his light with him; so the Scriptures were given to be *a lamp to our feet, and a light to our path.*

That we may continually use the Scriptures as our rule of life, we should make them our daily companion, and keep them with us continually. Josh. i. 8, "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night." See also Deut. vi. 6, 7, 8, 9. So Christ commands us to search the Scriptures, John v. 39. These are the mines wherein we are to dig for wisdom as for hidden treasures. Inquire, therefore, whether you do not live in the neglect of this duty, or neglect it so far, that you may be said to live in a way of sin.

(2.) Inquire whether you do not live in some way of secretly gratifying some sensual lust. There are many ways and degrees wherein a carnal lust may be indulged; but every way is provoking to a holy God. Consider whether, although you restrain yourselves from more gross indulgences, you do not in some way or other, and in some degree or other, secretly from time to time gratify your lusts, and allow youselves to taste the sweets of unlawful delight.

Persons may greatly provoke God, by only allowedly gratifying their lusts in their thoughts and imaginations. They may also greatly provoke God by excess and intemperance in gratifying their animal appetites in those things which are in themselves lawful. Inquire, therefore, whether you do not live in some sinful way or other, in secretly gratifying a sinful appetite.

4. I would propose to you, to examine yourselves, whether you do not live in some way of sin, in the spirit and temper of mind which you allow towards your neighbor.

(1.) Do you not allow and indulge a passionate, furious disposition? If your natural temper be hasty and passionate, do you truly strive against such a temper, and labor to govern your spirit? Do you lament it, and watch over yourselves to prevent it? Or do you allow yourselves in a fiery temper? Such a disposition doth not become a *Christian*, or a *man*. It doth not become a man, because it unmans him; it turns a man from a rational creature to be like a wild beast. When men are under the prevalency of a furious passion, they have not much of the exercise of reason. We are warned to avoid such men,

as being dangerous creatures, Prov. xxii. 24, 25: "Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go, lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul."

(2.) Do you not live in hatred towards some or other of your neighbors? Do you not hate him for real or supposed injuries that you have received from him? Do you not hate him, because he is not friendly towards you, and because you judge that he hath an ill spirit against you, and hates you, and because he opposes you, and doth not show you that respect which you think belongs to you, or doth not show himself forward to promote your interest or honor? Do you not hate him, because you think he despises you, has a mean thought of you, and takes occasion in his talk of you to show it? Do you not hate him, because he is of the opposite party to that which is in your interest, and because he has considerable influence in that party?

Doubtless you will be loth to call it by so harsh a name as *hatred;* but inquire seriously and impartially, whether it be any thing better. Do you not feel ill towards him? Do you not feel a prevailing disposition within you to be pleased when you hear him talked against and run down, and to be glad when you hear of any dishonor put upon him, or of any disappointments which happen to him? Would you not be glad of an opportunity to be even with him for the injuries which he hath done you? And wherein doth hatred work but in such ways as these?

(3.) Inquire whether you do not live in envy towards some one at least of your neighbors. Is not his prosperity, his riches, or his advancement in honor, uncomfortable to you? Have you not, therefore, an ill will, or at least less good will to him, because you look upon him as standing in your way, you look upon yourself as depressed by his advancement? And would it not be pleasing to you now, if he should be deprived of his riches, or of his honors, not from pure respect to the public good, but because you reckon he stands in your way? Is it not merely from a selfish spirit that you are so uneasy at his prosperity?

5. I shall propose to your consideration, whether you do not live in some way of sin, and wrong in your dealings with your neighbors.

(1.) Inquire whether you do not from time to time injure and defraud those with whom you deal. Are your ways with your neighbor altogether just, such as will bear a trial by the strict rules of the word of God, or such as you can justify before God? Are you a faithful person? May your neighbors depend on your word? Are you strictly and firmly true to your trust, or any thing with which you are betrusted, and which you undertake? Or do you not by your conduct plainly show, that you are not conscientious in such things?

Do you not live in a careless, sinful neglect of paying your debts? Do you not, to the detriment of your neighbor, sinfully withhold that which is not your own, but his? Are you not wont to oppress your neighbor? When you see another in necessity, do you not thence take advantage to screw upon him? When you see a person ignorant, and perceive that you have an opportunity to make your gains of it, are you not wont to take such an opportunity? Will you not deceive in buying and selling, and labor to blind the eyes of him of whom you buy, or to whom you sell, with deceitful words, hiding the faults of what you sell, and denying the good qualities of what you buy, and not strictly keeping to the truth, when you see that falsehood will be an advantage to you in your bargain?

(2.) Do you not live in some wrong which you have formerly done your neighbor, without repairing it? Are you not conscious that you have formerly, at some time or other, wronged your neighbor, and yet you live in it, have

never repaired the injury which you have done him? If so, you live in a way of sin.

6. I desire you would examine yourselves, whether you do not live in the neglect of the duties of charity towards your neighbor. You may live in sin towards your neighbor, though you cannot charge yourselves with living in any injustice in your dealings. Here also I would mention two things.

(1.) Whether you are guilty of sinfully withholding from your neighbor who is in want. Giving to the poor, and giving liberally and bountifully, is a duty absolutely required of us. It is not a thing left to persons' choice to do as they please; nor is it merely a thing commendable in persons to be liberal to others in want; but it is a duty as strictly and absolutely required and commanded as any other duty whatsoever, a duty from which God will not acquit us; as you may see in Deut. xv. 7, 8, &c.: and the neglect of this duty is very provoking to God. Prov. xxi. 13, "Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also himself shall cry, and not be heard."

Inquire, therefore, whether you have not lived in a way of sin in this regard. Do you now see your neighbor suffer, and be pinched with want, and you, although sensible of it, harden your hearts against him, and are careless about it? Do you not, in such a case, neglect to inquire into his necessities, and to do something for his relief? Is it not your manner to hide your eyes, in such cases, and to be so far from devising liberal things, and endeavoring to find out the proper objects and occasions of charity, that you rather contrive to avoid the knowledge of them? Are you not apt to make objections to such duties, and to excuse yourselves? And are you not sorry for such occasions, on which you are forced to give something, or expose your reputation? Are not such things grievous to you? If these things be so, surely you live in sin, and in a great sin, and have need to inquire, whether your spot be not such as is not the spot of God's children.

(2.) Do you not live in the neglect of reproving your neighbor, when you see him going on in a way of sin? This is required of us by the command of God, as a duty of love and charity which we owe our neighbor: Lev. xix. 17, "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart; thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him." When we see our neighbor going on in sin, we ought to go, and in a Christian way deal with him about it. Nor will it excuse us, that we fear it will have no good effect; we cannot certainly tell what effect it will have. This is past doubt, that if Christians generally performed this duty as they ought to do, it would prevent abundance of sin and wickedness, and would deliver many a soul from the ways of death.

If a man, going on in the ways of sin, saw that it was generally disliked and discountenanced, and testified against by others, it would have a strong tendency to reform him. His regard for his own reputation would strongly persuade him to reform; for hereby he would see that the way in which he lives makes him odious in the eyes of others. When persons go on in sin, and no one saith any thing to them in testimony against it, they know not but that their ways are approved, and are not sensible that it is much to their dishonor to do as they do. The approbation of others tends to blind men's eyes, and harden their hearts in sin; whereas, if they saw that others utterly disapprove of their ways, it would tend to open their eyes and convince them.

If others neglect their duty in this respect, and our reproof alone will not be so likely to be effectual; yet that doth not excuse us; for if one singly may be excused, then every one may be excused, and so we shall make it no duty at all.

Persons often need the reproofs and admonitions of others, to make them sensible that the ways in which they live are sinful; for, as hath been already observed, men are often blinded as to their own sins.

7. Examine yourselves, whether you do not live in some way of sin in your conversation with your neighbors. Men commit abundance of sin, not only in the business and dealings which they have with their neighbors, but in their talk and converse with them.

(1.) Inquire whether you do not keep company with persons of a lewd and immoral behavior, with persons who do not make conscience of their ways, are not of sober lives, but, on the contrary, are profane and extravagant, and unclean in their communication. This is what the word of God forbids, and testifies against: Prov. xiv. 7, "Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge." Prov. xiii. 20, "A companion of fools shall be destroyed." The Psalmist professes himself clear of this sin. Psalm xxvi. 4, 5, "I have not sat with vain persons; neither will I go with dissemblers: I have hated the congregation of evil doers, and will not sit with the wicked."

Do you not live in this sin? Do you not keep company with such persons? and have you not found them a snare to your souls? If you have any serious thoughts about the great concerns of your souls, have you not found this a great hinderance to you? Have you not found that it hath been a great temptation to you? Have you not been from time to time led into sin thereby? Perhaps it may seem difficult wholly to forsake your old wicked companions. You are afraid they will deride you, and make a game of you; therefore you have not courage enough to do it. But whether it be difficult or not, yet know this, that if you continue in such connections, you live in a way of sin, and, as the Scripture saith, *you shall be destroyed.* You must either cut off your right hands, and pluck out your right eyes, or else even go with them into the fire that never shall be quenched.

(2.) Consider whether, in your conversation with others, you do not accustom yourselves to evil speaking. How common is it for persons, when they meet together, to sit and spend their time in talking against others, judging this or that of them, spreading ill and uncertain reports which they have heard of them, running down one and another, and ridiculing their infirmities! How much is such sort of talk as this the entertainment of companies when they meet together! And what talk is there which seems to be more entertaining, to which persons will more listen, and in which they will seem to be more engaged, than such talk! You cannot but know how common this is.

Therefore examine whether you be not guilty of this. And can you justify it? Do you not know it to be a way of sin, a way which is condemned by many rules in the word of God? Are you not guilty of eagerly taking up any ill report which you hear of your neighbor, seeming to be glad that you have some news to talk of, with which you think others will be entertained? Do you not often spread ill reports which you hear of others, before you know what ground there is for them? Do you not take a pleasure in being the reporter of such news? Are you not wont to pass a judgment concerning others, or their behavior, without talking to them, and hearing what they have to say for themselves? Doth not that folly and shame belong to you which is spoken of in Prov. xviii. 13, "He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him."

This is utterly an iniquity, a very unchristian practice, which commonly prevails, that men, when they hear or know of any ill of others, will not do a

Christian part, in going to talk with them about it, to reprove them for it, but will get behind their backs before they open their mouths, and there are very forward to speak, and to judge, to the hurt of their neighbor's good name. Consider whether you be not guilty of this. Consider also how apt you are to be displeased when you hear that others have been talking against you! How forward you are to apply the rules, and to think and tell how they ought first to have come and talked with you about it, and not to have gone and spread an ill report of you, before they knew what you had to say in your vindication!

How ready are persons to resent it, when others meddle with their private affairs, and busy themselves, and judge, and find fault, and declaim against them! How ready are they to say, it is no business of theirs! Yet are you not guilty of the same?

(3.) Is it not your manner to seem to countenance and fall in with the talk of the company in which you are, in that which is evil? When the company is vain in its talk, and falls into lewd discourse, or vain jestery, is it not your manner, in such a case, to comply and fall in with the company, to seem pleased with its talk, if not to join with it, and help to carry on such discourse, out of compliance with your company, though indeed you disapprove of it in your hearts? So inquire whether it be not your manner to fall in with your companions, when they are talking against others. Do you not help forward the discourse, or at least seem to fall in with their censures, and the aspersions they cast on others, and the reflections they make upon their neighbors' character?

There are some persons, who, in case of difference between persons or parties, are double-tongued, will seem to fall in with both parties. When they are with those on one side, they will seem to be on their side, and to fall in with them, in their talk against their antagonists. At another time, when they are with those on the other side, they will seem to comply with them, and condemn the other party; which is a very vile and deceitful practice. Seeming to be friendly to both before their faces, they are enemies to both behind their backs; and that upon so mean a motive as the pleasing of the party with which they are in company. They injure both parties, and do what in them lies to establish the difference between them. Inquire whether or no this be your manner.

(4.) Is it not your manner, not to confine yourselves to strict truth in your conversation with your neighbors? Lying is accounted ignominious and reproachful among men; and they take it in high disdain to be called liars; yet how many are there that do not so govern their tongues, as strictly to confine them to the truth! There are various degrees of transgressing in this kind. Some who may be cautious of transgressing in one degree, may allow themselves in another. Some, who avoid commonly speaking directly and wholly contrary to the truth, in a plain matter of fact; yet perhaps are not strictly true in speaking of their own thoughts, desires, affections, and designs, and are not exact to the truth, in the relations which they give of things in conversation; scruple not to vary in circumstances, to add some things, to make their story the more entertaining; will magnify and enlarge things, to make their relation the more wonderful; and in things wherein their interest or credit is concerned, will make false representations of things; will be guilty of an unwarrantable equivocation, and a guileful way of speaking, wherein they are chargeable with a great abuse of language. In order to save their veracity, words and sentences must be wrested to a meaning quite beside their natural and established signification.

Whatever interpretation such men put on their own words, they do not save themselves from the guilt of lying in the sight of God. Inquire whether you be not guilty of living in sin in this particular.

8. Examine yourselves, whether you do not live in some way of sin in the families to which you belong. There are many persons who appear well among their neighbors, and seem to be of an honest civil behavior in their dealings and conversation abroad; yet if you follow them to their own houses, and to the families to which they belong, there you will find them very perverse in their ways; there they live in ways which are very displeasing to the pure all-searching eyes of God. You have already been directed to examine your conversation abroad; you have been directed to search the house of God, and to see if you have brought no defilement into it; you have been directed to search your closets, to see if there be no pollution or provocation there; be advised now to search your houses, examine your behavior in the families to which you belong, and see what your ways and manners are there.

The houses to which we belong are the places where the generality of us spend the greater part of our time. If we respect the world as a man's sphere of action, a man's own house is the greater part of the world to him; i. e., the greater part of his actions and behavior in the world is limited within this sphere. We should therefore be very critical in examining our behavior, not only abroad, but at home. A great proportion of the wickedness that men are guilty of, and that will be brought out at the day of judgment, will be the sin which they shall have committed in the families to which they belong.

Therefore inquire how you behave yourselves in the family relations in which you stand. As those relative duties which we owe towards the members of the same family belong to the second table of the law, so love is the general duty which comprises them all.

Therefore,

(1.) Examine yourselves, whether you do not live in some way which is contrary to that love which is due to those who belong to the same family. Love, implying a hearty good will, and a behavior agreeable to it, is a duty which we owe to all mankind. We owe it to our neighbors, to whom we are no otherwise related than as they are our neighbors; yea, we owe it to those who stand in no relation to us, except that they are of mankind, are reasonable creatures, the sons and daughters of Adam. It is a duty that we owe to our enemies; how much more then do we owe it to those who stand in so near a relation to us, as a husband or wife, parents or children, brethren or sisters!

There are the same obligations on us to love such relatives as to love the rest of mankind. We are to love them as men; we are to love them as our neighbors; we are to love them as belonging to the same Christian church; and not only so, but here is an additional obligation, arising from that near relation in which they stand to us. This is over and above the other. The nearer the relation, the greater is the obligation to love. To live in hatred, or in a way that is contrary to love, towards any man, is very displeasing to God; but how much more towards one of the same family! Love is the uniting band of all societies: Col. iii. 14, "And above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness."

The union in love in our own family should be so much the stronger, as that society is more peculiarly our own, and is more appropriated to ourselves, or is a society in which we are more especially interested. Christ saith, Matt. vii. 22, "I say unto you, whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire." If this be true concerning those who are our brethren only as men, or professing Christians, how much more concerning

those who are of the same family? If contention be so evil a thing in a town among neighbors, how much more hateful is it between members of the same family? If hatred, envy, or revenge, be so displeasing to God, towards those who are only our fellow creatures, how much more provoking must it be between those that are our natural brothers and sisters, and are one bone and flesh? If only being angry with a neighbor without a cause be so evil, how much sin must needs be committed in those broils and quarrels between the nearest relations on earth?

Let every one inquire how it is with himself. Do you not in this respect allow yourselves in some way of sin? Are you not often jarring and contending with those who dwell under the same roof? Is not your spirit often ruffled with anger towards some of the same family? Do you not often go so far as to wish evil to them in your hearts, to wish that some calamity would befall them? Are you not guilty of reproachful language towards them, if not of revengeful acts? Do you not neglect and refuse those offices of kindness and mutual helpfulness which become those who are of one family? Yea, are there not some who really go so far, as in some degree to entertain a settled hatred or malice against some of their nearest relations?

But here I would particularly apply myself,

(1.) To husbands and wives. Inquire whether you do not live in some way of sin in this relation. Do you make conscience of performing all those duties which God in his word requires of persons in this relation? Or do you allow yourselves in some ways which are directly opposite thereto? Do you not live in ways that are contrary to the obligations into which you entered in your marriage covenant? The promises which you then made are not only binding as promises which are ordinarily made between man and man, but they have the nature of vows or promissory oaths; they are made in the presence of God, because they respect him as a witness to them; and therefore the marriage covenant is called THE COVENANT OF GOD: Prov. ii. 17, "Which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God." When you have vowed that you will behave towards those to whom you are thus united, as the word of God directs in such a relation, are you careless about it, no more thinking what you have promised and vowed, regardless how you perform those vows?

Particularly, are you not commonly guilty of bitterness of spirit towards one another, and of unkindness in your language and behavior? If wrath, and contention, and unkind and reproachful language, be provoking to God, when only between neighbors; what is it then between those whom God hath joined together to be one flesh, and between whom he hath commanded so great and dear a friendship to be maintained? Eph. v. 28, 29, "So ought men to love their wives, as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife, loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church." Eph. v. 25, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it."

It is no excuse at all for either party to indulge bitterness and contention in this relation, that the other party is to blame; for when was there ever one of fallen mankind to be found, who had no faults? When God commanded such an entire friendship between man and wife, he knew that the greater part of mankind would have faults; yet he made no exception. And if you think your yoke-fellows have faults, you should consider whether you yourselves have not some too. There never will be any such thing as persons living in peace one with another, in this relation, if this be esteemed a sufficient and justifiable

cause of the contrary. It becomes good friends to cover one another's faults. *Love covers a multitude of faults.* Prov. x. 1, "Hatred stirreth up strife; but love covereth all sins." But are not you rather quick to spy faults, and ready to make the most of them? Are not very little things often the occasion of contention between you? Will not a little thing often ruffle your spirits towards your companions? And when any misunderstanding is begun, are you not guilty of exasperating one another's spirits by unkind language, until you blow up a spark into a flame?

Do you endeavor to accommodate yourselves to each other's tempers? Do you study to suit each other? Or do you set up your own wills, to have your own ways, in opposition to each other, in the management of your family concerns? Do you make it your study to render each other's lives comfortable? Or is there not, on the contrary, very often subsisting between you, a spirit of ill will, a disposition to vex and cross one another?

Husbands do sometimes greatly sin against God, in being of an unkind, imperious behavior towards their wives, treating them as if they were servants; and (to mention one instance of such treatment in particular) laying them under unjust and unreasonable restraints in the use and disposal of their common property; forbidding them so much as to dispose of any thing in charity, as of their own judgment and prudence. This is directly contrary to the word of God, where it is said of the virtuous wife, Prov. xxxi. 20, that "she stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy." If God hath made this her duty, then he hath given her this right and power, because the duty supposes the right. It cannot be the duty of her who hath no right to dispose of any thing, to stretch forth her hand to the poor, and to reach forth her hands to the needy.

On the other hand, are not the commands of God, the rules of his word, and the solemn vows of the marriage covenant, with respect to the subordination which there ought to be in this relation, made light of by many? Eph. v. 22, "Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as unto the Lord." So Col. iii. 18. What is commanded by God, and what hath been solemnly vowed and sworn in his presence, certainly ought not to be made a jest of; and the person who lightly violates these obligations will doubtless be treated as one who slights the authority of God, and takes his name in vain.

(2.) I shall apply myself to parents and heads of families. Inquire whether you do not live in some way of sin with respect to your children, or others committed to your care; and particularly inquire,

1. Whether you do not live in sin, by living in the neglect of instructing them. Do you not wholly neglect the duty of instructing your children and servants? Or if you do not wholly neglect it, yet do you not afford them so little instruction, and are you not so unsteady, and do you not take so little pains in it, that you live in a sinful neglect? Do you take pains in any measure proportionate to the importance of the matter? You cannot but own that it is a matter of vast importance, that your children be fitted for death, and saved from hell; and that all possible care be taken that it be done speedily; for you know not how soon your children may die. Are you as careful about the welfare of their souls as you are of their bodies? Do you labor as much that they may have eternal life, as you do to provide estates for them to live on in this world?

Let every parent inquire, whether he do not live in a way of sin in this respect; and let masters inquire whether they do not live in a way of sin, in neglecting the poor souls of their servants; whether their only care be not to make

their servants subservient to their worldly interest, without any concern what becomes of them to all eternity.

2. Do you not live in a sinful neglect of the government of your families? Do you not live in the sin of Eli? Who indeed counselled and reproved his children, but did not exercise government over them. He reproved them very solemnly, as 1 Sam. ii. 23, 24, 25; but he did not restrain them; by which he greatly provoked God, and brought an everlasting curse upon his house. 1 Sam. iii. 12, "In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house. When I begin, I will also make an end. I will judge his house forever; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not."

If you say you cannot restrain your children, this is no excuse; for it is a sign that you have brought up your children without government, that your children regard not your authority. When parents lose their government over their children, their reproofs and counsel signify but little. How many parents are there who are exceedingly faulty on this account! How few are there who are thorough in maintaining order and government in their families! How is family government in a great measure vanished! And how many are as likely to bring a curse upon their families, as Eli! This is one principal ground of the corruptions which prevail in the land. This is the foundation of so much debauchery, and of such corrupt practices among young people. Family government is in a great measure extinct. By neglect in this particular, parents bring the guilt of their children's sins upon their own souls, and the blood of their children will be required at their hands.

Parents sometimes weaken one another's hands in this work; one parent disapproving what the other doth; one smiling upon a child, while the other frowns; one protecting, while the other corrects. When things in a family are thus, children are like to be undone. Therefore let every one examine whether he do not live in some way of sin with respect to this matter.

(3.) I shall now apply myself to children. Let them examine themselves, whether they do not live in some way of sin towards their parents. Are you not guilty of some undutifulness towards them, in which you allow yourselves? Are you not guilty of despising your parents for infirmities which you see in them? Undutiful children are ready to contemn their parents for their infirmities. Are not you sons of Ham, who saw and made derision of his father's nakedness, whereby he entailed a curse on himself and his posterity to this day; and not the sons of Shem and Japheth, who covered the nakedness of their father? Are you not guilty of dishonoring and despising your parents for natural infirmities, or those of old age? Prox. xxiii. 22, "Despise not thy mother when she is old." Doth not that curse belong to you, in Deut. xxvii. 16, "Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or mother?"

Are you not wont to despise the counsels and reproofs of your parents? When they warn you against any sin, and reprove you for any misconduct, are you not wont to set light by it, and to be impatient under it? Do you honor your parents for it? On the contrary, do you not receive it with resentment, proudly rejecting it? Doth it not stir up corruption, and a stubborn and perverse spirit in you, and rather make you to have an ill will to your parents, than to love and honor them? Are you not to be reckoned among the fools mentioned, Prov. xv. 5, "A fool despiseth his father's instruction?" And doth not that curse belong to you, Prov. xxx. 17, "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it?"

Do you not allow a fretful disposition towards your parents, when they cross you in any thing? Are you not apt to find fault with your parents, and to be out of temper with them?

Consider, that if you live in such ways as these, you not only live in sin, but in that sin, than which there is scarcely any one oftener threatened with a curse in the word of God.

III. We come now to the *third* thing proposed in this use of the doctrine, viz., to mention some things, to convince those, who, upon examination, find that they do live in some way of sin, of the importance of their knowing and amending their manner of life. You have had directions laid before you, how to find out whether you do live in any way of sin or not: and you have heard many particulars mentioned as proper subjects for your examination of yourselves. How then do you find things? Do you find yourselves clear of living in any way of sin? I mean not whether you find yourselves clear of sin; that is not expected of any of you; for there is not a man upon earth that doeth good, and sinneth not, 1 Kings viii. 46. But is there not some way of sin in which you *live*, which is your *stated way*, or *practice?* There are doubtless some who are clear in this matter, some "who are undefiled in the way, and do no iniquity," Psal. cxix. 1, 2, 3.

Let your own consciences answer how you find with respect to yourselves, by those things which have been proposed to you. Do you not find that you are guilty? That you live in a way of sin, and have allowed yourselves in it? If this be the case, then consider the following things.

1. If you have been long seeking salvation, and have not yet succeeded, it may be this hath been the cause. You have perhaps wondered what hath been the matter, that you have been so long a time under concern about your salvation, that you have taken so much pains, and all seems to be to no purpose. You have many a time cried earnestly to God, yet he doth not regard you. Others obtain comfort, but you are left in darkness. But it is no wonder at all, if you have lived in some way of sin all this while. If you have lived in any sinful way, this is a sufficient reason why all your prayers and all your pains have been blasted.

If all this while you have lived in some sinful way, so far you have failed of seeking salvation in the right way. The right way of seeking salvation is, to seek it in the diligent performance of all duties, and in the denial of all ungodliness. If there be any one member that is corrupt, and you cut it not off, there is danger that it will carry you to hell, Matt. v. 29, 30.

2. If grace have not been in flourishing, but, on the contrary, in languishing circumstances in your souls, perhaps this is the cause. The way to grow in grace is to walk in the way of obedience to all the commands of God, to be very thorough in the practice of religion. Grace will flourish in the hearts of those who live in this manner; but if you live in some way of sin, that will be like some secret disease at your vitals, which will keep you poor, weak, and languishing.

One way of sin lived in will wonderfully keep you down in your spiritual prosperity, and in the growth and strength of grace in your hearts. It will grieve the Holy Spirit of God, and will in a great measure banish him from you: this will prevent the good influence of the word and ordinances of God to the causing of grace to flourish in you. It will be a great obstacle to their good effect. It will be like an ulcer within a man, which, while it remains, will keep him weak and lean, though you feed him with ever so wholesome food, or feast him ever so daintily.

3. If you have been left to fall into great sin, perhaps this was the occasion of it. If you have been left greatly to wound your own souls, perhaps this was what made way for it, that you allowed yourselves in some way of sin. A man who doth not avoid every sin, and is not universally obedient, cannot be well guarded against great sins. The sin in which he lives will be always an inlet, an open door, by which Satan from time to time will find entrance. It is like a breach in your fortress, through which the enemy may get in, and find his way to you, greatly to hurt and wound you.

If there be any way of sin which is retained as an outlet to corruption, it will be like a breach in a dam, which, if it be let alone, and be not stopped, will grow bigger and wider, and will endanger the whole. If any way of sin be lived in, it will be like Gideon's ephod, which was a snare to him and his house.

4. If you live very much in spiritual darkness, and without the comfortable presence of God, it may be this is the cause. If you complain that you have but little sweet communion with God, that you seem to be left and deserted of God, that God seems to hide his face from you, and but seldom gives you the sweet views of his glory and grace, that you seem to be left very much to grope in darkness, and to wander in a wilderness; perhaps you have wondered what is the matter; you have cried to God often, that you might have the light of his countenance, but he heareth you not; and you have sorrowful days and nights upon this account. But if you have found, by what hath been said, that you live in some way of sin, it is very probable that is the cause, that is the root of your mischief, that is the *Achan*, the troubler that offends God, and causes him to withdraw, and brings so many clouds of darkness upon your souls. You grieve the Holy Spirit by the way in which you live; and that is the reason that you have no more comfort from him.

Christ hath promised, that he will manifest himself to his disciples; but it is upon the condition, that they keep his commands. John xiv. 21, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father; and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." But if you habitually live in disobedience to any of the commandments of Christ, then it is no wonder that he doth not give you the comfortable manifestations of himself. The way to receive the special favors of God, and to enjoy comfortable communion with him, is to walk closely with him.

5. If you have been long doubting about your condition, perhaps this is the cause. If persons be converted, the most likely way to have the evidences of it clear, and to have the Spirit of God witnessing with our spirits, that we are the children of God, is to walk closely with God. This, as we have observed already, is the way to have grace in a flourishing state in the soul; it is the way to have the habits of grace strengthened, and the exercises of it lively. And the more lively the exercises of grace are, the more likely will they be to be seen. Besides, this is the way to have God manifesting himself to us, as our father and our friend, to have the manifestations and inward testimonies of his love and favor.

But if you live in some way of sin, it is no wonder if that greatly darkens your evidences, as it keeps down the exercises of grace, and hides the light of God's countenance. And it may be that you never will come to a comfortable resolution of that point, whether you be converted or not, until you shall have wholly forsaken the way of sin in which you live.

6. If you have met with frowns of Providence, perhaps this hath been the

cause. When you have met with very sore rebukes and chastisements, that way of sin hath probably been your troubler. Sometimes God is exceedingly awful in his dealings with his own people in this world, for their sins. Moses and Aaron were not suffered to enter into Canaan, because they believed not God, and spake unadvisedly with their lips, at the waters of Meribah. And how terrible was God in his dealings with David! What affliction in his family did he send upon him! One of his sons ravishing his sister; another murdering his brother, and, having expelled his father out of his kingdom, openly in the sight of all Israel, and in the sight of the sun, defiling his father's concubines on the top of the house, and at last coming to a miserable end! Immediately after this followed the rebellion of Sheba; and he had this uncomfortable circumstance attending the end of his life, that he saw another of his sons usurping the crown.

How awfully did God deal with Eli, for living in the sin of not restraining his children from wickedness! He killed his two sons in one day; brought a violent death upon Eli himself; took the ark from him, and sent it into captivity; cursed his house forever; and sware that the iniquity of his house should not be purged with sacrifice and offering forever; that the priesthood should be taken from him, and given to another family; and that there should never be an old man in his family.

Is not some way of sin in which you live the occasion of the frowns and rebukes of Providence which you have met with? True, it is not the proper business of your neighbors to judge you with respect to events of Providence; but you yourselves ought to inquire, wherefore God is contending with you, Job. ix. 10.

7. If death be terrible to you, perhaps this is the foundation of it. When you think of dying, you find you shrink back at the thought. When you have any illness, or when there in any thing which seems any way to threaten life, you find you are affrighted by it; the thoughts of dying and going into eternity, are awful to you; and that although you entertain a hope that you are converted. If you live in some way of sin, probably this is very much the foundation of it. This keeps your minds sensual and worldly, and hinders a lively sense of heaven and heavenly enjoyments. This keeps grace low, and prevents that relish of heavenly enjoyments which otherwise you would have. This prevents your having the comfortable sense of the divine favor and presence; and without that no wonder you cannot look death in the face without terror.

The way to have the prospect of death comfortable, and to have undisturbed peace and quiet when we encounter death, is, to walk closely with God, and to be undefiled in the way of obedience to the commands of God; and that it is otherwise sometimes with truly godly persons, is doubtless frequently owing to their living in ways displeasing to God.

8. If you find by these things which have been proposed to you, that you have lived in a way of sin, consider that if you henceforward live in the same way, you will live in known sin. Whether in time past it have been known sin or not, though you may have hitherto lived in it through ignorance or inadvertence; yet if now you be sensible of it, henceforward, if you continue in it still, it will not be a sin of ignorance, but you will be proved to be of that class of men who live in ways of known sin.

SERMON XXXII.

A WARNING TO PROFESSORS:

OR,

THE GREAT GUILT OF THOSE WHO ATTEND ON THE ORDINANCES OF DIVINE WORSHIP, AND YET ALLOW THEMSELVES IN ANY KNOWN WICKEDNESS.

EZEKIEL xxiii. 37, 38, 39.—That they have committed adultery, and blood is in their hands, and with their idols have they committed adultery, and have also caused their sons, whom they bare unto me, to pass for them through the fire to devour them. Moreover, this they have done unto me: they have defiled my sanctuary in the same day, and have profaned my sabbaths. For when they had slain their children to their idols, then they came the same day into my sanctuary to profane it; and lo, thus have they done in the midst of mine house.

INTRODUCTION.

SAMARIA and Jerusalem, or Israel and Judah, are here represented by two women, Aholah and Aholibah; and their idolatry and treachery towards their covenant God is represented by the adultery of these women. They forsook God, who was their husband, and the guide of their youth, and prostituted themselves to others. The baseness of Aholah and Aholibah towards God, their husband, is here pointed out by two things, viz., adultery and bloodshed: *They have committed adultery, and blood is in their hands.*

1. They committed adultery with other lovers, viz., with their idols: *With their idols have they committed adultery.*

2. They not only committed adultery, but they took their children that they bore to God, and killed them for their lovers. Their hearts were quite alienated from God, their husband, and they were so bewitched with lust after those other lovers, that they took their own children, whom they had by their husband, and put them to cruel deaths, to make a feast with them for their lovers; as it is said in ver. 37, "And have also caused their sons, whom they bare unto me, to pass for them through the fire to devour them."

But here is a twofold wickedness of those actions of theirs held forth to us in the words. (1.) The wickedness of them considered in themselves; for who can express the horrid baseness of this their treatment of God their husband? (2.) An additional wickedness, resulting from the joining of these actions with sacred things. Beside the monstrous wickedness of these actions in themselves considered, there was this which exceedingly increased the guilt, that on the same day they came into God's sanctuary, or that they lived in such wickedness at the same time that they came and attended the holy ordinances of God's house, pretending to worship and adore him, whom they all the while treated in such a horrid manner; and so herein defiled and profaned holy things; as in ver. 38, and 39: "Moreover, this have they done unto me; they have defiled my sanctuary in the same day, and have profaned my sabbaths. For when they had slain their children to their idols, then they came the same day into my sanctuary, to profane it; and lo, thus have they done, in the midst of mine house."

DOCTRINE.—When they that attend ordinances of divine worship allow themselves in known wickedness, they are guilty of dreadfully profaning and polluting those ordinances.

By a divine ordinance, when the expression is used in its greatest latitude,

is meant any thing of divine institution or appointment. Thus we call marriage a divine ordinance. because it was appointed by God. So civil government is called an ordinance of God: Rom. xiii. 1, 2. "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers; for there is no power but of God; the powers that be are *ordained* of God. Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the *ordinance* of God."

But the word is more commonly used only for an instituted or appointed way or means of worship. So the sacraments are ordinances; so public prayer, singing of praise, the preaching of the word, and the hearing of the word preached, are divine ordinances. The setting apart of certain officers in the church, the appointed way of discipline, public confession of scandals, admonition, and excommunication, are ordinances. These are called the ordinances of *God's house*, or of public worship; and these are intended in the doctrine: it is the profanation of these ordinances that is spoken of in the text: "They came into my sanctuary to profane it; and lo! thus have they done in the midst of mine house," saith God. This *doctrine* seems to contain two *propositions*.

SECTION I.

The ordinances of God are holy.

Divine ordinances are holy in the following respects:

1. They are *conversant* wholly and immediately about God, and things divine. When we are in the attendance on the ordinances of divine worship, we are in the special presence of God. When persons come and attend on the ordinances of God, they are said to come before God, and to come into his presence: Jer. vii. 10, "Come and stand before me, in this house which is called by my name." Psal. c. 2, "Come into his presence with singing."

In divine ordinances, persons have immediate intercourse with God, either in applying to him, as in prayer and singing praises, or in receiving from him, waiting solemnly and immediately on him for spiritual good, as in hearing the word; or in both applying to God and receiving from him, as in the sacraments. They were appointed on purpose that in them men might converse and hold communion with God. We are poor, ignorant, blind worms of the dust; and God did not see it meet that our way of intercourse with God should be left to ourselves; but God hath given us his ordinances, as ways and means of conversing with him.

In these ordinances, holy and divine things are exhibited and represented. In the preaching of the word, holy doctrines and the divine will are exhibited; in the sacraments, Christ Jesus and his benefits are represented; in prayer and praise, and in the attendance on the word and sacraments, are represented our faith, love, and obedience.

2. The *end* of God's ordinances is holy. The immediate end is to glorify God. They are instituted to direct us in the holy excercises of faith and love, divine fear and reverence, submission, thankfulness, holy joy and sorrow, holy desires, resolutions, and hopes. True worship consists in these holy and spiritual exercises; and as these divine ordinances are the ordinances of worship, they are to help us, and to direct us in such a worship as this.

3. They have the sanction of *divine authority*. They are not only conversant about a divine and holy object, and designed to direct and help us in divine and holy exercises, but they have a divine and holy author. The infinitely great and holy God hath appointed them, the eternal Three in One. Each person in the Trinity hath been concerned in their institution. God the Father

hath appointed them, and that by his own Son. They are of Christ's own appointment; and he appointed, as he had received of the Father: John xii 49, "I have not spoken of myself, but the Father which sent me, he gave me commandment what I should say, and what I should speak." And the Father and Son more fully revealed and ratified them by the Spirit; and they are committed to writing by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

They are holy, in that God hath hallowed them, or consecrated them. They are conversant about holy things; and God ordained them, that in them *we* might be conversant about holy things. They are for a holy use; and it is God who, by his own immediate authority, ordained them for that holy use; which renders them much more sacred than otherwise they would have been.

4. They are attended *in the name* of God. Thus we are commanded to do all that we do, in word or deed, in the name of Christ, Col. iii. 17, which is to be understood especially of our attendance on ordinances. Ordinances are administered in the name of God. When the word is preached by authorized ministers, they speak in God's name, as Christ's ambassadors, as co-workers together with Christ: 2 Cor. v. 20, "Now we are ambassadors for Christ." Chap. vi. 1, "We are workers together with him." When a true minister preaches, he speaks as the oracles of God, 1 Pet. iv. 12, and he is to be heard as one representing Christ.

So in administering the sacraments, the minister represents the person of Christ; he baptizes in his name, and in the Lord's supper stands in his stead. In administering church-censures, he still acts, as the apostle expresses it, in the person of Christ, 2 Cor. ii. 10. On the other hand, the congregation, in their addresses to God in ordinances, as prayer and praise, act in the name of Christ, the Mediator, as having him to represent them, and as coming to God by him.

SECTION II.

God's ordinances are dreadfully profaned by those who attend on them, and yet allow themselves in ways of wickedness.

Persons who come to the house of God, into the holy presence of God, attending the duties and ordinances of his public worship, pretending with others, according to divine institution, to call on the name of God, to praise him, to hear his word, and commemorate Christ's death, and who yet, at the same time, are willingly and allowedly going on in wicked courses, or in any practice contrary to the plain rules of the word of God, therein greatly profane the holy worship of God, defile the temple of God and those sacred ordinances on which they attend. The truth of this proposition appears by the following considerations.

1. By attending ordinances, and yet living in allowed wickedness, they show great *irreverence* and contempt of those holy ordinances. When persons who have been committing known wickedness, and yet live in it, and have no other design than to go on still in the same, when they come from their wickedness, as it were the same day, as it is expressed in the text, and attend the sacred solemn worship and ordinances of God, and then go from the house of God, directly to the like allowed wickedness—they hereby express a most irreverent spirit with respect to holy things, and in a horrid manner cast contempt upon God's sacred institutions, and on those holy things which we are concerned with in them.

They show that they have no reverence of that God who hath hallowed these

ordinances. They show a contempt of that divine authority which instituted them. They show a horribly irreverent spirit towards that God into whose presence they come, and with whom they immediately have to do in ordinances, and in whose name these ordinances are performed and attended. They show a contempt of that adoration of God, of that faith and love, and that humiliation, submission, and praise, which ordinances were instituted to express. What an irreverent spirit doth it show, that they are so careless after what manner they come before God! that they take no care to cleanse and purify themselves, in order that they may be fit to come before God! yea, that they take no care to avoid making themselves more and more unclean and filthy!

They have been taught many a time, that God is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity, and how exceedingly he is offended with sin; yet they care not how unclean and abominable they come into his presence. It shows horrid irreverence and contempt, that they are so bold, that they are not *afraid* to come into the presence of God in such a manner; and that they will presume to go out of the presence of God, and from an attendance upon holy things, again to their sinful practices. If they had any reverence of God and holy things, an approach into his presence, and an attendance on those holy things, would leave that awe upon their minds, that they would not dare to go immediately from them to their ways of known wickedness.

It would show a great irreverence in any person towards a king, if he should not care how he came into his presence, and if he should come in a sordid habit, and in a very indecent manner. How much more horrid irreverence doth it show, for persons willingly and allowedly to defile themselves with that filth which God infinitely hates, and so frequently to come into the presence of God!

2. By making a show of respect to God in ordinances, and then acting the contrary in their lives, they do but *mock* God. In attending ordinances, they make a show of respect to God. By joining in prayer, in public adorations, confessions, petitions, and thanksgivings, they make a show of high thoughts of God, and of humbling themselves before him; of sorrow for their sins, of thankfulness for mercies, and of a desire of grace and assistance to obey and serve God. By attending upon the hearing of the word, they make a show of a teachable spirit, and of a readiness to practise according to the instructions given. By attending on the sacraments, they make a show of faith in Christ, of choosing him for their portion, and spiritually feeding upon him.

But by their actions they all the while declare the contrary. They declare, that they have no high esteem of God, but that they despise him in their hearts. They declare, that they are so far from repenting of, that they intend to continue in their sins. They declare, that they have no desire of that grace and assistance to live in a holy manner for which they prayed, and that they had rather live wickedly: this is what they choose, and for the present are resolved upon. They declare by their actions, that there is no truth in what they pretend in hearing the word preached, that they had a desire to know what the will of God is, that they might be directed in their duty; for they declare by their actions, that they desire not to do the will of God, and that they do not intend any such thing: but intend, on the contrary, to disobey him; and that they prefer their carnal interests before his authority and glory.

They declare by their actions, that there is no truth in what they pretend in their attendance on the sacraments, that they desire to be fed with spiritual nourishment, and to be conformed and assimilated to Christ, and to have communion with him They show by their practices, that they have no regard to

Christ; and that they had rather have their lusts gratified, than to be fed with his spiritual food: they show, that they desire not any assimilation to Christ, but to be different from him, and of an opposite character to him: they show, that instead of desiring communion with Christ, they are his resolved and allowed enemies, wilfully acting the part of enemies to Christ, dishonoring him, and promoting the interest of Satan against him.

Now, what can this be else but mockery, to make a show of great respect, reverence, love and obedience, and at the same time wilfully to declare the reverse in actions. If a rebel or traitor should send addresses to his king, making a show of great loyalty and fidelity, and should all the while openly, and in the king's sight, carry on designs of dethroning him, how could his addresses be considered as any other than mockery? If a man should bow and kneel before his superior, and use many respectful terms to him, but at the same time should strike him, or spit in his face, would his bowing and his respectful terms be looked upon in any light than as done in mockery? When the Jews kneeled before Christ, and said, *Hail, King of the Jews*, but at the same time spit in his face, and smote him upon the head with a reed; could their kneeling and salutations be considered as any other than mockery?

Men who attend ordinances, and yet willingly live in wicked practices, treat Christ in the same manner that these Jews did. They come to public worship, and pretend to pray to him, to sing his praises, to sit and hear his word; they come to the sacrament, pretending to commemorate his death. Thus they kneel before him, and say, *Hail, King of the Jews;* yet at the same time they live in ways of wickedness, which they know Christ hath forbidden, of which he hath declared the greatest hatred, and which are exceedingly to his dishonor. Thus they buffet him, and spit in his face. They do as Judas did, who came to Christ saying, *Hail, Master*, and kissed him, at the same time betraying him into the hands of those who sought his life.

How can it be interpreted in any other light, when men come to public worship, and attend ordinances, and yet will be drunkards and profane swearers, will live in lasciviousness, injustice, or some other known wickedness? If a man should pray to God to keep him from drunkenness, and at the same time should put the bottle to his own mouth, and drink himself drunk; the absurdity and horrid wickedness of his conduct would be manifest to every man. But the very same thing, though not so visible to us, is done by those who make profession of great respect to God, and pray God from time to time to keep them from sin; yet at the same time have no design to forsake their known sins, but intend the contrary.

God sees men's designs and resolutions more plainly than we can see their outward actions; therefore for a man to pray to God to be kept from sin, and at the same time to intend to sin, is mockery as visible to God as if he prayed to be kept from some particular sin, which he was at the same time willingly and allowedly committing.

These persons are guilty of a horrid profanation of God's ordinances; for they make them occasions of a greater affront to God, the occasions of showing their impudence and presumption; for he who lives in wilful wickedness, and doth not enjoy the ordinances of God, is not guilty of so great presumption, as he who attends these ordinances, and yet allows himself in wickedness. This latter acts as though he came into the presence of God on purpose to affront him. He comes from time to time to hear the will of God, and all the while designs disobedience, and goes away and acts directly contrary to it.

A servant would affront his master by wilfully disobeying his commands in

any wise. But he would affront him much more, if he should on every occasion come to him to inquire his will, as though he were ready to do whatever his master would have him do, and then should immediately go away and do the contrary.

3. They put the ordinances of God to a *profane use.* The ordinances of God are holy, as they are set apart of God to a holy use and purpose. They are the worship of God, instituted for the ends of giving honor and glory to him, and to be means of grace and spiritual good to us. But those persons who attend these ordinances, and yet live in allowed wickedness, aim at neither of these ends: they, in their attendance on ordinances, neither aim to give honor to God, or to express any love, or esteem, or thankfulness; nor do they sincerely seek the good of their own souls. It is not truly the aim of any such persons to obtain grace, or to be made holy; their actions plainly show that this is not their desire; they choose to be wicked, and intend it.

It is not therefore to these purposes that they improve the holy ordinances of God; but they put them to another and profane use. They attend ordinances to avoid that discredit which a voluntary and habitual absence from them would cause among those with whom they live, to avoid the punishment of human laws, or for their worldly advantage; to make up for other wickedness, or for some other carnal purposes. Thus they profane the ordinances of God, by perverting them to profane purposes.

4. When persons thus treat God's holy ordinances, it tends to *beget contempt* of them in others. When others see sacred things commonly used so irreverently, and attended with such carelessness and contempt, and treated without any sacred regard; when they see persons are bold with them, treat them without any solemnity of spirit; when they see them thus commonly profaned, it tends to diminish their sense of their sacredness, and to make them seem no very awful things. In short, it tends to embolden them to do the like.

The holy vessels and utensils of the temple and tabernacle were never to be put to a common use, nor to be handled without the greatest care and reverence: for if it had been commonly otherwise, the reverence of them could not have been maintained; they would have seemed no more sacred than any thing else. So it is in the ordinances of Christian worship.

SECTION III.

A call to self-examination.

Let this doctrine put all upon *examining* themselves, whether they do not allow themselves in known wickedness. You are such as do enjoy the ordinances of divine worship. You come into the holy presence of God, attending on those ordinances, which God, by sacred authority, hath hallowed and set apart, that in them we might have immediate intercourse with himself; that we might worship and adore him, and express to him a humble, holy, supreme respect; and that in them we might receive immediate communications from him.

Here you come and speak to God, pretending to express your sense how glorious he is, and how worthy that you should fear and love him, humble yourselves before him, devote yourselves to him, obey him, and have a greater respect to his commands and to his honor, than to any temporal interest, ease, or pleasure of your own. Here you pretend before God, that you are sensible how unworthily you have done by sins committed in times past, and that you have a great desire not to do the like in time to come. You pretend to confess your

sins, and to humble yourselves for them. Here you pray that God would give you his Spirit to assist you against sin, to keep you from the commission of it, enable you to overcome temptations, and help you to walk holily in all your conversation, as though you really had a great desire to avoid such sins as you have been guilty of in time past. And the like pretences you have made in your attendance upon the other ordinances, as in hearing the word, in singing praise, &c.

But consider whether you do not horribly defile and profane the public prayers and other ordinances. Notwithstanding all your pretences, and what you seem to hold forth by your attendance on them, do you not all the while live in known wickedness against God? For all your pretences of respect to God, of humiliation for sin, and desires to avoid it, have you not come directly from the allowed practice of known sin to God's ordinances, and did not at all repent of what you had done, nor at all sorry for it at the very time when you stood before God, making these pretences; and even had no design of reformation, but intended to return to the same practice again after your departure from the presence of God?—I say, hath not this, on many occasions, been your manner of coming and attending on the ordinances of divine worship? Not only so, but is it not still your manner, your common way of attending upon these ordinances, even to this very day? Do you not lie to God with your tongues, when you pretend, that he is a great God, and that you are poor, guilty, unworthy creatures, deserving his wrath by the sins of which you have been guilty? and when you pretend, that you earnestly desire he would keep you from the like for time to come? Are you not guilty of horrid mockery of God in it, when at the same time you design no such thing, but the contrary?

Do you not even the same day that you come into God's house, and to his ordinances, allow yourselves in known sins? Do you not with consent and approbation think of the sinful practices, in which you allow yourselves, and in which you have been exercising yourselves in the week past? Do you not the very day in which you attend ordinances, allowedly please and gratify a wicked imagination? And are you not then perpetrating wickedness in your thoughts, and contriving the future fulfilment of your wickedness? Yea, are you not guilty of these things sometimes even in the very time of your attendance on ordinances, when you are in the immediate presence of God? and while others have immediate intercourse with God, and you likewise pretend to the same? Do you not, even in these circumstances, allow yourselves in wicked thoughts and imaginations, voluntarily wallowing in known wickedness?

Are not some of you guilty of allowedly breaking God's holy Sabbath, in maintaining no government of your thoughts, thinking indifferently about any thing that comes next to mind; and not only thinking, but talking too about common, worldly affairs? And sometimes talking in such a manner, as is not suitable even on other days; talking profanely, or in an unclean manner, sporting and diverting yourselves in such conversation on God's holy day? Yea, it is well if some have not been thus guilty in the very time of attendance on the ordinances of worship.

Examine yourselves, how it hath been with you. You all attend many of the ordinances of divine worship. You come to the house of God, attend public prayers, singing, and preaching of the word; and many of you come to the Lord's supper, that holy ordinance, instituted for the special commemoration of the greatest and most wonderful of all divine acts towards mankind; for the special and visible representation of the most glorious and wonderful things

of our religion; for the most solemn profession and renewal of your engagement to God; and for special communion with Jesus Christ. Let such examine themselves whether they do not allow themselves in known sin, to the horrid profanation and pollution of this most sacred ordinance.

Examine and see whether you do not allow yourselves in some way of dealing with your fellow men, which you have sufficient light to know to be evil; or whether you do not allow yourselves in a known evil behavior towards some person or persons of the families to which you respectively belong, as towards your husbands, your wives, your children, or servants; or your neighbors, in your spirit and behavior towards them, or in your talk of them.

Examine whether you do not some way willingly indulge an unclean appetite, in less or grosser acts of uncleanness, or in your discourse, or in your imagination. Or do you not give way to a lust after strong drink, or indulge yourselves in some vicious excess in gratifying some sensual appetite in meat or drink, or otherwise? Are you not willingly guilty of vanity, and extravagance in your conversation?

Do you not, for all your attendance on ordinances, continue in the allowed neglect of your precious souls, neglecting secret prayer or some known duty of private religion? Or do you not allow yourselves in Sabbath-breaking?—In all these ways are the ordinances of God's sacred worship polluted and profaned.

Men are apt to act very treacherously and perversely in the matter of self-examination. When they are put upon examining themselves, they very often decline it, and will not enter into any serious examination of themselves at all. They hear uses of examination insisted on, but put them off to others, and never seriously apply them to themselves.—And if they do examine themselves, when they are put upon it, they are exceedingly partial to themselves; they spare themselves; they do not search, and look, and pass a judgment according to truth; but so as unreasonably to favor and justify themselves.—If they can be brought to examine themselves at all, whether they do not allow themselves in known wickedness, although they attend on divine ordinances, they will not do it impartially. Their endeavor will not be indeed to know the truth of their case, and to give a true answer to their consciences; but to blind themselves, to persuade and flatter themselves that they do not allow themselves in known sin, whether it be true or not. There are two things especially wherein persons often act very perversely and falsely in this matter.

1. Persons very often deal very perversely in pretending, that the sins in which they live are *not known* sins. Nothing is more common surely, than for persons to flatter themselves with this concerning the wickedness in which they live. Let that wickedness be almost what it may, they will plead to their consciences, and endeavor to still them, that there is no evil in it, or that they do not *know* that there is any evil in it. Men's own consciences can best tell how they are wont to do in this matter.—There is hardly any kind of wickedness that men commit, but they will plead thus in excuse for it. They will plead thus about their cheating and injustice, about their hatred of their neighbors, about their evil speaking, about their revengeful spirit, about their excessive drinking, about their lying, their neglect of secret prayer, their lasciviousness, their unclean dalliances; yea, they will plead excuses for very gross acts of uncleanness, as fornication, adultery, and what not. They have their vain excuses and carnal reasonings in favor of all their evil actions. They will say, What harm, what evil is there in such and such an action? And if there be a plain rule against it, yet they will plead that their circumstances are peculiar, and that they are excepted from the general rule; that their temp-

tation is so great, that they are excusable; or some thing will they find to plead.

If it be some thing upon which their lusts are much set, and about which they feel remorse of conscience, they will never leave studying and contriving with all the art and subtlety of which they are masters, till they shall have found out some reason, some excuse, with which they shall be able in some measure to quiet their consciences. And whether after all they shall have made it out to blind conscience or not, yet they will plead that their argument is good, and it is no sin; or if it be a sin, it is only a sin of ignorance.—So men will plead for the wickedness which they do in the dark. So without doubt some very *gross* sinners plead to their consciences; as would appear, if we could but look into their hearts; when indeed the strongest argument they have, *that in such a thing there is no evil*, is the strongest lust they have to it, the inordinate desire they have to commit it.

It was the saying of one, *Licitis perimus omnes;* that is, *We all perish by lawful things;* which is as much as to say, men commonly live wickedly and go to hell, in those ways which they flatter themselves to be lawful. Or at least they flatter themselves, that they are sins of ignorance; they do not know them to be unlawful.—Thus, I make no doubt some will be apt to do, in applying to themselves this use of examination, if they can be persuaded to apply it to themselves at all. Whether these things be true of you, let your own consciences speak, you that neglect secret prayer; you that live in secret, unclean, lascivious actions; you that indulge an inordinate appetite for strong drink; you that defraud or oppress others; you that indulge a spirit of revenge and hatred towards your neighbor.—Here I desire you to consider two or three things.

(1.) Not all sins, which one knows not with a certain knowledge to be sinful, are justly called sins of ignorance. Men often will excuse themselves for venturing upon a sinful action or practice, with this, that they know not that it is sinful; which is at most true no otherwise than as they do not know it to be sinful with a *certain* knowledge, or with the evidence of absolute demonstration; although at the same time it is a sin against their light, and against great light. They have been so taught, that they have had light enough to make them sensible that it is displeasing to God, and not warranted or allowed by him. And they do in their consciences think it to be sinful; they are secretly convinced of it, however they may pretend the contrary, and labor to deceive themselves, and to persuade themselves that they do not think there is any evil in it.

Those sins which are contrary to sufficient information and instruction, and contrary to the real dictates of their own consciences, or to the judgment of their own minds; whether there be certain or demonstrative knowledge or no; these are what I would be understood to mean, when I speak of known sins. Such light as this, whether there be absolutely certain knowledge or no, is sufficient to render the action utterly inexcusable, or to render it, when allowed, a horrible profanation and pollution of the holy ordinances of God.

(2.) It is in vain for persons to pretend that those are sins of ignorance, which they have often and clearly heard testified against from the word of God. It will be found to be so at last; it will be found to be a vain thing for persons who have lived under the light of the gospel, and where all manner of iniquity is testified against, if they live in immoral and vicious practices, to pretend that they are sins of ignorance; unless the case be very peculiar and extraordinary.

(3.) It is in vain for you to pretend that those are sins of ignorance, of which you would not dare to proceed in the practice, if you knew that your sou-

was to be required of you this night. Persons do many things, for which they plead, and pretend they think there is no evil in them, who yet would as soon eat fire, as do the same, if they knew that they were to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ within four and twenty hours. This shows that persons do but prevaricate, when they pretend that their sins are sins of ignorance.

2. Another way wherein men deal falsely and perversely in this matter, is, in pretending that they do *not allow* themselves in those sins which they practise. They either pretend that they know them not to be sins, or if they cannot but own that, then they will say, they do not allow themselves in them; and so they hope God is not very much provoked by them. They pretend this, though they make a trade of them. They go on repeating one act after another, without ever seriously repenting of past, or resolving against future acts. But take heed that you do not deceive yourselves in this matter; for such pretences, however they do something towards stilling your consciences now, will do nothing when you come to stand before your righteous and holy Judge.

SECTION IV.

Address to such as attend ordinances, and yet allow themselves in known sin.

Consider how holy and sacred the ordinances of God are; what mockery you are guilty of in making such a show, and such pretences in attending ordinances, and yet voluntarily acting the reverse of what you pretend. Consider that there is no sort of sinners with whom God is so provoked, and who stand so guilty before him, as the profaners of his ordinances. The fire of God's wrath is kindled by none so much as by the polluters of holy things. They are represented as those who are especially guilty before God, in the third commandment: "The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." Why is this annexed to this command, rather than to any other of the ten, but because the breach of it especially renders a man guilty in the sight of God?

The taking of God's name in vain includes the profanation and pollution of ordinances and holy things. They do in a very dreadful manner take God's name in vain, who attend on his ordinances, and yet live in known sin; for, as we have shown, they manifest the greatest irreverence for him, and contempt of divine things. They manifest a contempt of his authority, a contempt of the business and design of his ordinances, and a most careless and irreverent spirit in things wherein they have immediate converse with God. Ordinances, as we have shown, are attended in the name of God; and therefore, by such an attendance on them, the name of God is greatly profaned. You that attend ordinances in such a manner, take the name of God so much in vain, that you use it only in mockery, and so as to expose it to contempt. Such a way of attending ordinances is a trampling of all that is sacred under foot.

We have in Scripture scarce any such awful instances of the immediate and miraculous vengeance of God, as on the profaners of holy things. How did God consume Nadab and Abihu, for offering strange fire before him! How did he break forth upon Uzza, for handling the ark with too much irreverence! 2 Sam. vi. 6, 7. And how did he break forth on the children of Israel at Bethshemesh, for profaning the ark! "He smote of the people fifty thousand threescore and ten men," as in 1 Sam. vi. 19.

And God hath threatened in the New Testament, that if any man "defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy," 1 Cor. iii. 17. There is an emphasis in the expression. God will destroy all sinners, let it be what sin it will which they commit, and in which they con-

tinue; and yet it is said, "If any man defile the temple of God, *him* shall God destroy," as if it had been said, there is something peculiar in the case, and God is especially provoked to destroy such, and consume them in the fire of his wrath; and he will indeed destroy them with a destruction especially dreadful.

So God hath declared, Gal. vi. 7, "That he will not be mocked;" i. e., if any presume to mock him, they will find him, by experience, to be no contemptible being. God will vindicate his holy majesty from the contempt of those who dare to mock him, and he will do it effectually: they shall fully find how dreadful a being he is, whose name they have daringly profaned and polluted. Defilers and profaners of ordinances, by known and allowed wickedness, provoke God more than the heathen, who have no ordinances. Thus the wickedness of Judah and Jerusalem is said to be far worse than that of Sodom, though the inhabitants of Sodom were, as we have reason to think, some of the worst of the heathens. See Ezek. xvi. 46, 47, &c. The sin of Sodom is here spoken of as a light thing in comparison with the sins of Judah. And what should be the reason, but that Judah enjoyed holy things which they profaned and polluted, which Sodom had no opportunity to do? for it is not to be supposed, that Judah otherwise arrived to the same pass that Sodom had.

Consider therefore, ye who allow yourselves in known wickedness, and live in it, who yet come to the house of God, and to his ordinances from time to time, without any serious design of forsaking your sins, but, on the contrary, with an intention of continuing in them, and who frequently go from the house of God to your wicked practices; consider how guilty you have made yourselves in the sight of God, and how dreadfully God is provoked by you. It is a wonder of God's patience, that he doth not break forth upon you, and strike you dead in a moment; for you profane holy things in a more dreadful manner than Uzza did, when yet God struck him dead for his error. And whereas he was struck dead for only one offence; you are guilty of the same sin from week to week, and from day to day.

It is a wonder that God suffers you to live upon earth, that he hath not, with a thunderbolt of his wrath, struck you down to the bottomless pit long ago. You that are allowedly and voluntarily living in sin, who have gone on hitherto in sin, are still going on, and do not design any other than to go on yet; it is a wonder that the Almighty's thunder lies still, and suffers you to sit in his house, or to live upon earth. It is a wonder that the earth will bear you, and that hell doth not swallow you up. It is a wonder that fire doth not come down from heaven, or come up from hell, and devour you; that hell-flames do not enlarge themselves to reach you, and that the bottomless pit hath not swallowed you up.

However, that you are as yet borne with, is no argument that your damnation slumbers. The anger of God is not like the passions of men, that it should be in haste. There is a day of vengeance and recompense appointed for the vessels of wrath; and when the day shall have come, and the iniquity shall be full, none shall deliver out of God's hand. Then will he recompense, even recompense into your bosoms.

SERMON XXXIII.

GOD THE BEST PORTION OF THE CHRISTIAN.

Psalm lxxiii. 25.—Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.

The Psalmist, in this psalm, relates the great difficulty that he met with in his own mind, from the consideration of the prosperity of wicked men. He tells us, ver. 2 and 3, "As for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." In the 4th and following verses, he informs us, what it was he had observed in the wicked, which was his temptation. In the first place, he observed, that they were very prosperous, and all things went well with them. He then observed their behavior in their prosperity, and the use which they made of it; and that God, notwithstanding such a use or abuse, continued their prosperity, as in the 6th and following verses. Then the Psalmist tells us by what means he was helped out of this difficulty, viz., by going into the sanctuary, verses 16, 17; and proceeds to inform us what considerations they were which helped him, viz., these three:

1. The consideration of the miserable end of wicked men. However they prosper for the present, yet they come to a woful end at last, ver. 18, 19, 20.

2. The consideration of the blessed end of the saints. Although the saints, while they live, may be afflicted, yet they come to a happy end at last, ver. 21, 22, 23, 24.

3. The consideration, that the godly have a much better portion than the wicked, even though they have no other portion than God; as in the text and following verse. If it be so, that the wicked are in prosperity, and are not in trouble as other men; yet the godly, though they be in affliction, are in a state infinitely better than the wicked, because they have God for their portion. However they may have nothing else, this is enough, without the enjoyments of wicked men; they need desire nothing else; he that hath God, hath all. Thus the Psalmist professes it was with him, in the sense and apprehension which he had of things: *Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.*

In the verse immediately preceding, the Psalmist takes notice how the saints are happy in God, both when they are here in this world, and also when they are taken to another world. They are blessed in God in this world, in that while here God *guides them by his counsel;* and when he takes them out of this world, they are still happy, in that then God *receives them to glory.* The Psalmist having thus taken notice of the happiness of the saints in God, both while here upon earth, and also when removed into another world, was probably by this observation led, in the next verse, which is the text, to declare that he desired no other portion, either in this world or in the world to come, either in heaven or upon earth

DOCTRINE.

It is the spirit of a truly godly man, to prefer God before all other things, either in heaven or on earth

1. A godly man prefers God before any thing else in heaven.

1. He prefers God before any thing else that *actually is* in heaven. Every godly man hath his heart in heaven; his affections are mainly set on heaven, and what is to be had there. Heaven is his chosen country and inheritance. He hath respect to heaven, as a traveller who is on occasion abroad in a distant land hath to his own country. The traveller can content himself to be in a strange land for a while, until his present occasion and business be over; but his own native land is preferred by him to all others. Heb. xi. 13, &c., "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things, declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned: but now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly."

So also the respect which a godly person hath to heaven, may be compared to the respect which a child, when he is abroad, hath to his father's house. He can be contented abroad for a little while; but the place to which he desires to return, and in which to dwell, is his own home at his father's house. Heaven is the true saint's father's house. John xiv. 2, "In my Father's house are many mansions." John xx. 17, "I ascend to my Father and your Father."

Now, the main reason why the godly man hath his heart thus in heaven, is because God is there; that is the palace of the most high God; it is the place where God is gloriously present, where he is to be seen, where he is to be enjoyed, where his love is gloriously manifested, where the godly may be with him, see him as he is, and love, serve, praise, and enjoy him perfectly. It is for this chiefly that a godly man desires heaven. If God and Christ were not in heaven, he would not be so earnest in seeking it, nor would he take so much pains in a laborious travel through this wilderness, nor would the consideration that he is going to heaven when he dies, be such a comfort to him under the toils and afflictions of the world, as it now is. The martyrs would not undergo those cruel sufferings which are brought upon them by their persecutors, with that cheerfulness in a prospect of going to heaven, did they not expect to go and be with Christ, and to enjoy God there. They would not with that cheerfulness forsake all their earthly possessions, and all their earthly friends, as many thousands of them have done, and wander about in poverty and banishment, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, in hopes of exchanging their earthly for a heavenly inheritance, were it not that they hope to be with their glorious Redeemer and heavenly Father in heaven.

If God and Christ were not in heaven, however beautiful the place be, and whatever excellent creature inhabitants there be there, yet heaven would be but an empty place, it would be but an unlovely place. The believer's heart is in heaven, because his treasure is there; and that treasure is Jesus Christ, the same that we read of in Matt. xiii. 44, which is there called "a treasure hid in a field, which, when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all he hath, and buyeth that field."

2. A godly man prefers God before any thing else that *might be* in heaven. Not only is there nothing actually in heaven, which is in his esteem equal with God; but neither is there any thing of which he can conceive as possible to be there, which by him is esteemed and desired equally with God. Those of some nations and professions suppose quite different enjoyments to be in heaven, from those which the Scriptures teach us to be there. The Mahometans, for instance, suppose that in heaven are to be enjoyed all manner of sensual delights and

pleasures. Many things which Mahomet has feigned are, to the lusts and carnal appetites of men, the most agreeable that he could devise; and he flattered his followers with promises of such enjoyments in heaven.

But the true saint, if he were to contrive such a heaven as would suit him best, could not conceive one more agreeable to his inclination and desires, than such a one as is revealed in the word of God; a heaven of the enjoyment of the glorious God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, where he shall have all sin taken away, and shall be perfectly conformed to God, where he shall have a perfect acquaintance with God, and shall spend an eternity in exalted exercises of love to God, and in the enjoyment of his love. Such a heaven is to the saint better than any Mahometan paradise; it is the best heaven that can possibly be; there is no happiness conceived of, that would be better, or that would appear so desirable to him, as this. If God were not to be enjoyed in heaven, but, instead of that, there were vast wealth, immense treasures of silver and gold, and great honor of such kind as men obtain in this world, and a fulness of the greatest sensual delights and pleasures; all these things would not make up for the want of God and Christ, and the enjoyment of them there. If it were empty of God, it would indeed be an empty melancholy place.

The godly have been made sensible, as to all creature enjoyments, that they cannot satisfy the soul, and that happiness is in God; and therefore nothing will content them but God. Offer a saint what you will, if you deny him God, he will esteem himself miserable. His soul thirsts for God, to come and appear before God. God is the centre of his desires; and as long as you keep his soul from its proper centre, it will not be at rest. The true saint sets his heart on God as the chief good.

II. It is the spirit of a godly man to prefer God before all other things on the earth.

1. The saint prefers that enjoyment of God, for which he hopes hereafter, to any thing in this world. He looketh not at the things which are seen, and are temporal, so much as at those things which are unseen and eternal, 1 Cor. iv. 18. It is but a little of God that the saint enjoys here in this world; he hath but a little acquaintance with God, and enjoys but a little of the manifestations of the divine glory and love. But God hath promised to give him himself hereafter in a full enjoyment. And these promises of God are more precious to the saint, than the most precious earthly jewels. The gospel which contains these promises, doth therein contain greater treasures, in his esteem, than the cabinets of princes, or the mines of the Indies.

2. The saints prefer what of God may be obtained in this world before all things in the world. They not only prefer those glorious degrees of the enjoyment of God which are promised hereafter, before any thing in this world; but even such degrees as may be attained to here in the present state, though they are immensely short of what is to be enjoyed in heaven. There is a great difference in the spiritual attainments of the saints in this world. Some attain to much greater acquaintance and communion with God, and conformity to him, than others. But the highest attainments are very small in comparison with what is future.

The saints are capable of making progress in spiritual attainments, and of obtaining more of God than ever yet they have obtained; and they are of such a spirit that they earnestly desire such further attainments. Not contented with those degrees to which they have already attained, they hunger and thirst after righteousness, and as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby. It is their desire, to know more of God, to have

more of his image, and to be enabled more to imitate God and Christ in their walk and conversation. The appetite of the soul of a godly man is after God and Jesus Christ, as appears by many places of Scripture; as Psalm xxvii. 4, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." Psalm xlii. 1, 2, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? Psalm lxiii. 1, 2, "O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee; my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." See also Psalm lxxxiv. 1, 2, 3, and Psalm cxxx. 6, "My soul waiteth for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning."

Though every saint has not this longing desire after God to the same degree that the Psalmist had, yet they are all of the same spirit; they have a spirit earnestly to desire and long for more of God, to be nearer to him, to have more of his presence and of the light of his countenance, and to have more of God in their hearts. That this is the spirit of the godly in general, and not of some particular saints only, appears from Isa. xxvi. 8, 9, where not any particular saint, but the church in general, speaks thus: "Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. With my soul have I desired thee in the night, and with my spirit within me will I seek thee early."

It appears also to be the spirit of the saints in general, by some expressions of the spouse or the church in the Canticles; as chapter iii. 1, 2: "By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth; I sought him, but I found him not. I will rise now, and go about the city; in the streets and broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth." So chapter v. 6, 8: "I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer. I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick of love."

The saints are not always in the lively exercise of such a spirit; but such a spirit they have, and sometimes they have the sensible exercise of it: they have a spirit to desire God and divine attainments, more than all earthly things. They desire and seek to be rich in grace, more than they do to get earthly riches. They seek and desire the honor which is of God, more than that which is of men, John v. 44. They desire communion with God, more than any earthly pleasures whatsoever. They are in some measure of the same spirit which the apostle expresses in Philip. iii. 8: "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ."

3. The saint prefers *what he hath already of God* before any thing in this world. That which was infused into his heart at his conversion, is more precious to him than any thing which the world can afford. The knowledge and acquaintance which he hath with God, though it be but little, he would not part with for any thing that the world can afford. The views which are sometimes given him of the beauty and excellency of God, are more precious to him than all the treasures of the wicked. The relation of a child in which he stands to God, the union which there is between his soul and Jesus Christ, he values more than the greatest earthly dignity; he had rather have this, than to be the child of a prince. He would not part with the honor which God hath been

pleased to put on him by bringing him so near to him, to be set upon an earthly throne, or to wear an earthly crown, though it were the most splendid that ever was worn by any earthly potentate.

That image of God which is instamped on his soul, he values more than any earthly ornaments. It is, in his esteem, better to be adorned with the graces of God's Holy Spirit, than to be made to shine in jewels of gold, and the most costly pearls, or to be admired for the greatest external beauty. He values the robe of the righteousness of Christ, which he hath on his soul, more than the robes of princes. The spiritual pleasures and delights which he sometimes has in God, he prefers far before all the pleasures of sin: Psalm lxxxiv. 10, "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand: I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."

A saint thus prefers God before all things in this world,

1. As he prefers God before any thing else that he *possesses* in the world. Whatever temporal enjoyments he has, he prefers God to them all. If he have pleasant earthly accommodations; yet it is with respect to God, and not his earthly accommodations, that he saith, as in Psalm xvi. 5, 6: "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot. The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." If he be rich, yet he chiefly sets his heart, not on his earthly, but his heavenly riches. He prefers God before any earthly friend, and the favor of God before any respect that is shown him by his fellow creatures.

Although a godly man may have many earthly enjoyments, yet in his heart he sets God above them all. Although he may give these room in his heart, and too much room; yet he reserves the throne for God: Luke xiv. 26, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."

2. He prefers God before any earthly enjoyment of which he *hath a prospect.* The children of men commonly set their hearts more on some earthly happiness for which they hope, and after which they are seeking, than on what they have in present possession. They very much live upon vain hopes of happiness in earthly things, a happiness which they imagine is to be obtained by and by. But a godly man prefers God to any thing which he has in prospect, or is seeking in the world. He may, indeed, through the prevalence of corruption for a season be carried away and swallowed up, with some enjoyment which he is pursuing; however, he will again come to himself; this is not the temper of the man, he is of another spirit.

3. It is the spirit of a godly man to prefer God to any earthly *enjoyment* of which he can conceive. He not only prefers him to any thing which he now possesses; but he sees nothing possessed by any of his neighbors, or any of his fellow creatures, that he has such an esteem of, as he has of God. If he could have as much worldly prosperity as he would, if he could have earthly things, just to his mind, and agreeable to his inclination; he values the portion which he has in God, above such a portion as this: he prefers Christ to earthly kingdoms.

APPLICATION.

4. Hence we may learn, that whatever changes a godly man passes through he is happy; because God, who is unchangeable, is his chosen portion. If he meet with temporal losses, and be deprived of many of his temporal enjoyments, or of all of them; yet God, whom he prefers before all those things which he

hath lost, still remains, and cannot be lost. While he stays here in this changeable, troublesome world, yet he is happy, because his chosen portion, on which he builds, as his main foundation for happiness, is above the world, and above all changes. And if he die and go into another world, still he is happy, because that portion which he prefers to all that is either in this or another world, yet remains. Whatever he be deprived of, he cannot be deprived of his chief portion; his inheritance remains sure to him.

If worldly minded men could find out a way to secure to themselves some certain earthly enjoyments, on which they mainly set their hearts, so that they could not be lost, nor impaired while they live, how great would they account the privilege, though other things which they esteem in a less degree were liable to the same uncertainty as they now are? Whereas now, those earthly enjoyments, on which men chiefly set their hearts, are often most fading. But how great is the happiness of those who have chosen the Fountain of all good, and prefer him before all things in heaven or on earth, as they can never be deprived of him to all eternity!

2. Let all by these things examine and try themselves, whether they be saints or not. As this which hath been exhibited is the spirit of the saints, so it is peculiar to them: none can use the language of the text, and say, *Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee*, but the saints. A man's choice is that which determines his state. He that chooses God for his portion, and prefers him to all other things, is a godly man, for *he* chooses and worships God as God. To respect God as God, is to respect him above all other things; and if any man respect God as his God, his God he is; there is a union and covenant relation between that man and the true God.

Every man is as his God is. If you would know what a man is, whether he be a godly man or not, you must inquire what his God is. If the true God be he whom he respects as his God, i. e., to whom he hath a supreme respect, and whom he regards above all; he is doubtless a godly man, a servant of the true God. But if the man have some other god, something else to which he pays a greater respect than to Jehovah, he is not a godly man; God is not his God; he doth not worship him for his God, nor doth he belong to God, as one of his people.

Inquire, therefore, how it is with you, whether you prefer God before all other things. It may sometimes be some difficulty for persons to determine this to their satisfaction; the ungodly may be deluded with false affections; the godly in dull frames may be at a loss about it. Therefore you may try yourselves as to this matter these several ways; if you cannot speak fully to one thing, yet you may perhaps to others.

1. What is it which chiefly makes you desire to go to heaven when you die? Indeed some have no great desire to go to heaven. They do not care to go to hell; but if they could but be safe from that, they would not much concern themselves about heaven. If it be not so with you, but you find that you have a desire to go to heaven, then inquire what it is for. Is the main reason, that you may be with God, have communion with him, and be conformed to him? That you may see God, and enjoy him there? Is the consideration that these things are to be had in heaven, that which keeps your heart, and your desires, and your expectations towards heaven?

(2.) If you could avoid death, and might have your free choice, would you choose to live always in this world without God, rather than in God's time to leave the world, in order to be with God in the full enjoyment of him? If you might live here in earthly prosperity to all eternity, but destitute of the presence

of God and communion with him, having no spiritual divine intercourse between God and your souls, God and you being strangers to each other forever; would you choose this rather than to leave the world, in order to go and dwell in God's house in heaven, as the children of God, there to enjoy the glorious privileges of children, in an acquaintance with God, in a holy and perfect love to God, and enjoyment of him to all eternity?

(3.) Do you prefer Christ to all others as the way to heaven? He who chooses God, and prefers him, as hath been spoken of, he prefers him in each person of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; the Father, as his Father; the Son, as his Saviour; the Holy Ghost, as his Sanctifier. Inquire, therefore, not only whether you choose the enjoyment of God in heaven as your highest portion and happiness, but also whether you choose Jesus Christ before all others, as your way to heaven; and that in a sense of the excellency of Christ, and of the way of salvation by him, as being that which is to the glory of Christ, and to the glory of sovereign grace. Is the way of free grace, by the blood and righteousness of the blessed and glorious Redeemer, the most excellent way to life in your esteem? Doth it add a value to the heavenly inheritance, that it is conferred in this way? Is this far better to you than to be saved by your own righteousness, by any of your own performances, or by any other mediator?

(4.) If you might go to heaven in what course you please, would you prefer to all others the way of a strict walk with God? They that prefer God as hath been represented, choose God, as you have heard, not only hereafter, but here; they choose and prefer him, not only in the end, but in the way. They had rather be with God than with any other, when they come to the end of their journey; and not only so, but they had rather have God with them than any other, while they are in the way thither. Their chosen way of going to heaven is a way of strict walking with God. They would neither fail of coming to God in the end, nor would they depart from God by the way. They choose the way of walking with God, though it be a way of labor, and care, and self-denial, rather than a way of sin, though it be a way of sloth, and of gratifying their lusts.

(5.) If it were so, that you were to spend your eternity here in this world, would you choose rather to live in mean and low circumstances with the gracious presence of God, than to live forever in earthly prosperity without God in the world? If you were to spend your eternity in this world, would you rather spend it in a way of holy living, in serving and walking with God, and in the enjoyment of the privileges of the children of God, having God often manifesting himself to you as your Father, discovering to you his glory, and manifesting his love, lifting the light of his countenance upon you, as God often doth to his saints in this world; would you rather choose these things, though you should live in poverty, and with but little of the good things of this world, than to abound in a fulness of worldly things, and to live in ease and prosperity, at the same time being an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, standing in no childlike relation to God, enjoying no gracious intercourse with him, having no right in God, either to have him for your God, or to be acknowledged by him as his children? Or would such a life as this, though in ever so great earthly prosperity, be esteemed by you a miserable life?

If, after all this, there remain with you doubts, and a difficulty to determine concerning yourselves whether you do truly and sincerely prefer God to all other things, I would mention two things which are the surest ways to be determined in this matter, and which seem to be the best grounds of satisfaction in it.

1. The feeling of some particular, strong, and lively exercises of such a spirit. A person may have such a spirit as is spoken of in the doctrine, and may have the exercise of it in a low degree, and yet remain in doubt whether he have it or not, and be unable, by all his self-examination, to come to a satisfying determination. But God is pleased at some times to give to some of his people, such lively and strong exercises of such a spirit, and they see it so clearly, and feel it so plainly, that it puts it, at least for the present, out of doubt. They obtain such discoveries of the glory of God, and of the excellency of Christ, as do so draw forth the heart, that they know beyond all doubt or question, that they feel such a spirit as Paul spake of, when he said, "He counted all things but loss, for the excellency of Christ Jesus his Lord;" and they can boldly say, as in the text, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." At such times the people of God do not need any help of ministers to satisfy them whether they have the true love of God; they plainly see and feel it; and the Spirit of God then witnesseth with their spirits, that they are the children of God.

Therefore, if you would be satisfied upon this point, earnestly seek such attainments; seek that you may have such clear and lively exercises of this spirit. To this end, you must press forward, and labor to grow in grace. If you have had such experiences in times past, and they satisfied you then, yet you may again doubt. You should therefore seek that you may have them more frequently; and the way to that is, earnestly to press forward, that you may have more acquaintance with God, and have the principles of grace strengthened. This is the way to have the exercises of grace stronger, more lively, and more frequent, and so to be satisfied that you have a spirit of supreme love to God.

2. The other way is, to inquire whether you prefer God to all other things in practice, i. e., whether, when you have occasion in the course of your life to manifest by your practice which you prefer, when you must either cleave to one or the other, and must either forsake other things, or forsake God; whether then it be your manner practically to prefer God to all other things whatever, even to your dearest earthly enjoyments, to those earthly things to which your hearts are most wedded. Do you lead such lives as this? Are your lives, lives of adherence to God, and of serving God in this manner?

He that doth sincerely prefer God to all other things in his heart, he will do it in his practice. For when God and all other things come to stand in competition, that is the proper trial what a man chooses; and the manner of acting in such cases must certainly determine what the choice is in all free agents or those who act on choice. Therefore there is no sign of sincerity so much insisted on in the Bible as this, that we deny ourselves, sell all, forsake the world, take up the cross, and follow Christ whithersoever he goeth.

Therefore, so run, not as uncertainly; so fight, not as those that beat the air; but keep under your bodies, and bring them into subjection. Act not as though you counted yourselves to have apprehended; but this one thing do, "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." 2 Pet. i. 5, &c., "And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

SERMON XXXIV.

GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY.

ROMANS ix. 18.—Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth

THE apostle, in the beginning of this chapter, expresses his great concern and sorrow of heart for the nation of the Jews, who were rejected of God. This leads him to observe the difference which God made by election between some of the Jews and others, and between the bulk of that people and the Christian Gentiles. In speaking of this he enters into a more minute discussion of the sovereignty of God in electing some to eternal life, and rejecting others, than is found in any other part of the Bible; in the course of which he quotes several passages from the Old Testament, confirming and illustrating this doctrine. In the ninth verse he refers us to what God said to Abraham, showing his election of Isaac before Ishmael—"For this is the word of promise; At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son:" then to what God had said to Rebecca, showing his election of Jacob before Esau, "The elder shall serve the younger;" in the thirteenth verse, to a passage from Malachi, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated:" in the fifteenth verse, to what God said to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy; and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion:" and the verse preceding the text, to what God says to Pharaoh, "For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth." In what the apostle says in the text, he seems to have respect especially to the two last-cited passages: to what God said to Moses in the fifteenth verse, and to what he said to Pharaoh in the verse immediately preceding. God said to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." To this the apostle refers in the former part of the text. And we know how often it is said of Pharaoh, that God hardened his heart. And to this the apostle seems to have respect in the latter part of the text; "and whom he will he hardeneth." We may observe in the text,

1. God's different dealing with men. He hath mercy on some, and hardeneth others. When God is here spoken of as hardening some of the children of men, it is not to be understood that God by any positive efficiency hardens any man's heart. There is no positive act in God, as though he put forth any power to harden the heart. To suppose any such thing would be to make God the immediate author of sin. God is said to harden men in two ways: by withholding the powerful influences of his Spirit, without which their hearts will remain hardened, and grow harder and harder; in this sense he hardens them, as he leaves them to hardness. And again, by ordering those things in his providence which, through the abuse of their corruption, become the occasion of their hardening. Thus God sends his word and ordinances to men which, by their abuse, prove an occasion of their hardening. So the apostle said, that he was unto some "a savor of death unto death." So God is represented as sending Isaiah on this errand, to make the hearts of the people fat, and to make their ears heavy, and to shut their eyes; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand

with their heart, and convert, and be healed, Isa. vi. 10. Isaiah's preaching was, in itself, of a contrary tendency, to make them better. But their abuse of it rendered it an occasion of their hardening. As God is here said to harden men, so he is said to put a lying spirit in the mouth of the false prophets. 2 Chron. xviii. 22. That is, he suffered a lying spirit to enter into them. And thus he is said to have bid Shimei curse David, 2 Sam. xvi. 10. Not that he properly commanded him; for it is contrary to God's commands. God expressly forbids cursing the ruler of the people, Exod. xxii. 28. But he suffered corruption at that time so to work in Shimei, and ordered that occasion of stirring it up, as a manifestation of his displeasure against David.

2. The foundation of his different dealing with mankind; viz., his sovereign will and pleasure. "He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." This does not imply, merely, that God never shows mercy or denies it against his will, or that he is always willing to do it when he does it. A willing subject or servant, when he obeys his lord's commands, may never do any thing against his will, nothing but what he can do cheerfully and with delight; and yet he cannot be said to do what he wills in the sense of the text. But the expression implies that it is God's mere will and sovereign pleasure, which supremely orders this affair. It is the divine will without restraint, or constraint, or obligation.

DOCTRINE.

God exercises his sovereignty in the eternal salvation of men.

He not only is a sovereign, and has a sovereign right to dispose and order in that affair; and he not only might proceed in a sovereign way, if he would, and nobody could charge him with exceeding his right; but he actually does so; he exercises the right which he has. In the following discourse, I propose to show,

I. What is God's sovereignty.

II. What God's sovereignty in the salvation of men implies.

III. That God actually doth exercise his sovereignty in this matter.

IV. The reasons for this exercise.

I. I would show what is God's sovereignty.

The sovereignty of God is his absolute, independent right of disposing of all creatures according to his own pleasure. I will consider this definition by the parts of it.

The will of God is called his mere pleasure,

1. In opposition to any constraint. Men may do things voluntarily, and yet there may be a degree of constraint. A man may be said to do a thing voluntarily, that is, he himself does it; and, all things considered, he may choose to do it; yet he may do it out of fear, and the thing in itself considered be irksome to him, and sorely against his inclination. When men do things thus, they cannot be said to do them according to their mere pleasure.

2. In opposition to its being under the will of another. A servant may fulfil his master's commands, and may do it willingly, and cheerfully, and may delight to do his master's will; yet when he does so, he does not do it of his own mere pleasure. The saints do the will of God freely. They choose to do it; it is their meat and drink. Yet they do not do it of their mere pleasure and arbitrary will; because their will is under the direction of a superior will.

3. In opposition to any proper obligation. A man may do a thing which he is obliged to do, very freely; but he cannot be said to act from his own mere will and pleasure. He who acts from his own mere pleasure, is at full

liberty; but he who is under any proper obligation, is not at liberty, but is bound. Now the sovereignty of God supposes, that he has a right to dispose of all his creatures according to his mere pleasure in the sense explained. And his right is absolute and independent. Men may have a right to dispose of some things according to their pleasure. But their right is not absolute and unlimited. Men may be said to have a right to dispose of their own goods as they please. But their right is not absolute; it has limits and bounds. They have a right to dispose of their own goods as they please, provided they do not do it contrary to the law of the state to which they are subject, or contrary to he law of God. Men's right to dispose of their things as they will, is not absolute, because it is not independent. They have not an independent right to what they have, but in some things depend on the community to which they belong, for the right they have; and in every thing depend on God. They receive all the right they have to any thing from God. But the sovereignty of God imports that he has an absolute, and unlimited, and independent right of disposing of his creatures as he will. I proposed to inquire,

II. What God's sovereignty in the salvation of men implies. In answer to this inquiry, I observe, it implies that God can either bestow salvation on any of the children of men, or refuse it, without any prejudice to the glory of any of his attributes, except where he has been pleased to declare, that he will or will not bestow it. It cannot be said absolutely, as the case now stands, that God can, without any prejudice to the honor of any of his attributes, bestow salvation on any of the children of men, or refuse it; because, concerning some, God has been pleased to declare either that he will or that he will not bestow salvation on them; and thus to bind himself by his own promise. And concerning some he has been pleased to declare, that he never will bestow salvation upon them; viz., those who have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost. Hence, as the case now stands, he is obliged; he cannot bestow salvation in one case, or refuse it in the other, without prejudice to the honor of his truth. But God exercised his sovereignty in making these declarations. God was not obliged to promise that he would save all who believe in Christ; nor was he obliged to declare, that he who committed the sin against the Holy Ghost should never be forgiven. But it pleased him so to declare. And had it not been so that God had been pleased to oblige himself in these cases, he might still have either bestowed salvation, or refused it, without prejudice to any of his attributes. If it would in itself be prejudicial to any of his attributes to bestow or refuse salvation, then God would not in that matter act as absolutely sovereign. Because it then ceases to be a merely arbitrary thing. It ceases to be a matter of absolute liberty, and is become a matter of necessity or obligation. For God cannot do any thing to the prejudice of any of his attributes, or contrary to what is in itself excellent and glorious. Therefore,

1. God can, without prejudice to the glory of any of his attributes, bestow salvation on any of the children of men, except on those who have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost. The case was thus when man fell, and before God revealed his eternal purpose and plan for redeeming men by Jesus Christ. It was probably looked upon by the angels as a thing utterly inconsistent with God's attributes to save any of the children of men. It was utterly inconsistent with the honor of the divine attributes to save any one of the fallen children of men, as they were in themselves. It could not have been done had not God contrived a way consistent with the honor of his holiness, majesty, ustice, and truth. But since God in the gospel has revealed that nothing is too hard for him to do, nothing beyond the reach of his power, and wisdom, and

sufficiency; and since Christ has wrought out the work of redemption, and fulfilled the law by obeying, there is none of mankind whom he may not save without any prejudice to any of his attributes, excepting those who have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost. And those he might have saved without going contrary to any of his attributes, had he not been pleased to declare that he would not. It was not because he could not have saved them consistently with his justice, and consistently with his law, or because his attribute of mercy was not great enough, or the blood of Christ not sufficient to cleanse from that sin. But it has pleased him for wise reasons to declare that that sin shall never be forgiven in this world, or in the world to come. And so now it is contrary to God's truth to save such. But otherwise there is no sinner, let him be ever so great, but God can save him without prejudice to any attribute; if he has been a murderer, adulterer, or perjurer, or idolater, or blasphemer, God may save him if he pleases, and in no respect injure his glory. Though persons have sinned long, have been obstinate, have committed heinous sins a thousand times, even till they have grown old in sin, and have sinned under great aggravations: let the aggravations be what they may; if they have sinned under ever so great light; if they have been backsliders, and have sinned against ever so numerous and solemn warnings and strivings of the Spirit, and mercies of his common providence: though the danger of such is much greater than of other sinners, yet God can save them if he pleases, for the sake of Christ, without any prejudice to any of his attributes. He may have mercy on whom he will have mercy. He may have mercy on the greatest of sinners, if he pleases, and the glory of none of his attributes will be in the least sullied. Such is the sufficiency of the satisfaction and righteousness of Christ, that none of the divine attributes stand in the way of the salvation of any of them. Thus the glory of any attribute did not at all suffer by Christ's saving some of his crucifiers.

1. God may save any of them without prejudice to the honor of his holiness. God is an infinitely holy being. The heavens are not pure in his sight. He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity. And if God should in any way countenance sin, and should not give proper testimonies of his hatred of it, and displeasure at it, it would be a prejudice to the honor of his holiness. But God can save the greatest sinner without giving the least countenance to sin. If he saves one, who for a long time has stood out under the calls of the gospel, and has sinned under dreadful aggravations; if he saves one who, against light, has been a pirate or blasphemer, he may do it without giving any countenance to their wickedness; because his abhorrence of it and displeasure against it have been already sufficiently manifested in the sufferings of Christ. It was a sufficient testimony of God's abhorrence against even the greatest wickedness, that Christ, the eternal Son of God, died for it. Nothing can show God's infinite abhorrence of any wickedness more than this. If the wicked man himself should be thrust into hell, and should endure the most extreme torments which are ever suffered there, it would not be a greater manifestation of God's abhorrence of it, than the sufferings of the Son of God for it.

2. God may save any of the children of men without prejudice to the honor of his majesty. If men have affronted God, and that ever so much, if they have cast ever so much contempt on his authority; yet God can save them, if he pleases, and the honor of his majesty not suffer in the least. If God should save those who have affronted him, without satisfaction the honor of his majesty would suffer. For when contempt is cast upon infinite majesty, its honor suffers, and the contempt leaves an obscurity upon the honor of the divine majesty, if

the injury is not repaired. But the sufferings of Christ do fully repair the injury. Let the contempt be ever so great, yet if so honorable a person as Christ undertakes to be a Mediator for the offender, and in the mediation suffer in his stead, it fully repairs the injury done to the majesty of heaven by the greatest sinner.

3. God may save any sinner whatsoever consistently with his justice. The justice of God requires the punishment of sin. God is the Supreme Judge of the world, and he is to judge the world according to the rules of justice. It is not the part of a judge to show favor to the person judged, but he is to determine according to a rule of justice without departing to the right hand or left. God does not show mercy as a judge, but as a sovereign. And therefore when mercy sought the salvation of sinners, the inquiry was how to make the exercise of the mercy of God as a sovereign, and of his strict justice as a judge, agree together. And this is done by the sufferings of Christ, in which sin is punished fully, and justice answered. Christ suffered enough for the punishment of the sins of the greatest sinner that ever lived. So that God, when he judges, may act according to a rule of strict justice, and yet acquit the sinner, if he be in Christ. Justice cannot require any more for any man's sins, than those sufferings of one of the persons in the Trinity, which Christ suffered: Rom iii. 25, 26, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood; to declare his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Christ."

4. God can save any sinner whatsoever, without any prejudice to the honor of his truth. God passed his word, that sin should be punished with death, which is to be understood not only of the first, but of the second death. God can save the greatest sinner consistently with his truth in this threatening. For sin is punished in the sufferings of Christ, inasmuch as he is our surety, and so is legally the same person, and sustained our guilt, and in his sufferings bore our punishment. It may be objected, that God said, If thou eatest, thou shalt die; as though the same person that sinned must suffer; and therefore why does not God's truth oblige him to that? I answer, that the word then was not intended to be restrained to him, that in his own person sinned. Adam probably understood that his posterity were included, whether they sinned in their own person or not. If they sinned in Adam, their surety, those words, "if thou eatest," meant, if thou eatest in thyself, or in thy surety. And therefore, the latter words, "thou shalt die," do also fairly allow of such a construction as, thou shalt die in thyself, or in thy surety: Isa. xlii. 21, "The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake, he will magnify the law and make it honorable." But,

II. God may refuse salvation to any sinner whatsoever, without prejudice to the honor of any of his attributes.

There is no person whatever in a natural condition, upon whom God may not refuse to bestow salvation without prejudice to any part of his glory. Let a natural person be wise or unwise, of a good or ill natural temper, of mean or honorable parentage, whether born of wicked or godly parents; let him be a moral or immoral person, whatever good he may have done, however religious he has been, how many prayers soever he has made, and whatever pains he has taken that he may be saved; whatever concern and distress he may have for fear he shall be damned; or whatever circumstances he may be in; God can deny him salvation without the least disparagement to any of his perfections. His glory will not in any instance be the least obscured by it.

1. God may deny salvation to any natural person without any injury to the

honor of his righteousness. If he does so, there is no injustice nor unfairness in it. There is no natural man living, let his case be what it will, but God may deny him salvation, and cast him down to hell, and yet not be chargeable with the least unrighteous or unfair dealing in any respect whatsoever. This is evident, because they all have deserved hell; and it is no injustice for a proper judge to inflict on any man what he deserves. And as he has deserved condemnation, so he has never done any thing to remove the liability, or to atone for the sin. He never has done any thing whereby he has laid any obligations on God not to punish him as he deserved.

2. God may deny salvation to any unconverted person whatever without any prejudice to the honor of his goodness. Sinners are sometimes ready to flatter themselves, that though it may not be contrary to the justice of God to condemn them, yet it will not consist with the glory of his mercy. They think it will be dishonorable to God's mercy to cast them into hell, and have no pity or compassion upon them. They think it will be very hard and severe, and not becoming a God of infinite grace and tender compassion. But God can deny salvation to any natural person without any disparagement to his mercy and goodness. That which is not contrary to God's justice, is not contrary to his mercy. If damnation be justice, then mercy may choose its own object.

They mistake the nature of the mercy of God, who think that it is an attribute, which, in some cases, is contrary to justice. Nay, God's mercy is illustrated by it, as in the twenty-third verse of the context: "That he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory."

3. It is in no way prejudicial to the honor of God's faithfulness. For God has in no way obliged himself to any natural man by his word to bestow salvation upon him. Men in a natural condition are not the children of promise; but lie open to the curse of the law, which would not be the case if they had any promise to lay hold of.

III. God does actually exercise his sovereignty in men's salvation.

We shall show how he exercises this right in several particulars.

1. In calling one people or nation, and giving them the means of grace, and leaving others without them. According to the divine appointment, salvation is bestowed in connection with the means of grace. God may sometimes make use of very unlikely means, and bestow salvation on men who are under very great disadvantages; but he does not bestow grace wholly without any means. But God exercises his sovereignty in bestowing those means. All mankind are by nature in like circumstances towards God. Yet God greatly distinguishes some from others by the means and advantages which he bestows upon them. The savages, who live in the remote parts of this continent, and are under the grossest heathenish darkness, as well as the inhabitants of Africa, are naturally in exactly similar circumstances towards God with us in this land. They are no more alienated or estranged from God in their natures than we; and God has no more to charge them with. And yet what a vast difference has God made between us and them! In this he has exercised his sovereignty. He did this of old, when he chose but one people, to make them his covenant people, and to give them the means of grace, and left all others, and gave them over to heathenish darkness and tyranny of the devil, to perish from generation to generation for many hundreds of years. The earth in that time was peopled with many great and mighty nations. There were the Egyptians, a people famed for their wisdom. There were also the Assyrians and Chaldeans, who were

great, and wise, and powerful nations. There were the Persians, who by their strength and policy subdued a great part of the world. There were the renowned nations of the Greeks and Romans, who were famed over the whole world for their excellent civil governments, for their wisdom and skill in the arts of peace and war, and who by their military prowess in their turns subdued and reigned over the world. Those were rejected. God did not choose them for his people, but left them for many ages under gross heathenish darkness, to perish for lack of vision; and chose one only people, the posterity of Jacob, to be his own people, and to give them the means of grace: Psal. cxlvii. 19, 20, "He showeth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation; and as for his judgments, they have not known them." This nation were a small, inconsiderable people in comparison with many other people: Deut. vii. 7, "The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people." So neither was it for their righteousness; for they had no more of that than other people: Deut. ix. 6, "Understand therefore, that the Lord thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiff-necked people." God gives them to understand, that it was from no other cause but his free electing love, that he chose them to be his people. That reason is given why God loved them; it was because he loved them, Deut. vii. 8. Which is as much as to say, it was agreeable to his sovereign pleasure to set his love upon you.

God also showed his sovereignty in choosing that people, when other nations were rejected, who came of the same progenitors. Thus the children of Isaac were chosen, when the posterity of Ishmael and other sons of Abraham were rejected. So the children of Jacob were chosen, when the posterity of Esau were rejected: as the apostle observes in the seventh verse, "Neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children; but in Isaac shall thy seed be called;" and again in verses 10, 11, 12, 13: "And not only this; but when Rebekah also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; the children moreover being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the promise of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth; it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." The apostle has not respect merely to the election of the persons of Isaac and Jacob before Ishmael and Esau; but of their posterity. In the passage, already quoted from Malachi, God has respect to the nations, which were the posterity of Esau and Jacob: Mal. i. 2, 3, "I have loved you, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob; and I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness." God showed his sovereignty, when Christ came, in rejecting the Jews, and calling the Gentiles. God rejected that nation who were the children of Abraham according to the flesh, and had been his peculiar people for so many ages, and who alone possessed the one true God, and chose idolatrous heathen before them, and called them to be his people. When the Messiah came, who was born of their nation, and whom they so much expected, he rejected them. He came to his own, and his own received him not, John i. 11. When the glorious dispensation of the gospel came, God passed by the Jews, and called those who had been heathens, to enjoy the privileges of it. They were broken off, that the Gentiles might be grafted on, Rom. xi. 17. She is now called beloved, that was not beloved. And more are the children of the desolate, than the children of the married wife, Isa. liv. 1. The natural chil-

dren of Abraham are rejected, and God raised up children to Abraham of stones. That nation, which was so honored of God, have now been for many ages rejected, and remain dispersed all over the world, a remarkable monument of divine vengeance. And now God greatly distinguishes some Gentile nations from others, and all according to his sovereign pleasure.

2. God exercises his sovereignty in the advantages he bestows upon particular persons. All need salvation alike, and all are, naturally, alike undeserving of it; but he gives some vastly greater advantages for salvation than others. To some he assigns their place in pious and religious families, where they may be well instructed and educated, and have religious parents to dedicate them to God, and put up many prayers for them. God places some under a more powerful ministry than others, and in places where there are more of the outpourings of the Spirit of God. To some he gives much more of the strivings and the awakening influences of the Spirit, than to others. It is according to his mere sovereign pleasure.

3. God exercises his sovereignty in sometimes bestowing salvation upon the low and mean, and denying it to the wise and great. Christ in his sovereignty passes by the gates of princes and nobles, and enters some cottage and dwells there, and has communion with its obscure inhabitants. God in his sovereignty withheld salvation from the rich man, who fared sumptuously every day, and bestowed it on poor Lazarus, who sat begging at his gate. God in this way pours contempt on princes, and on all their glittering splendor. So God sometimes passes by wise men, men of great understanding, learned and great scholars, and bestows salvation on others of weak understanding, who only comprehend some of the plainer parts of Scripture, and the fundamental principles of the Christian religion. Yea, there seem to be fewer great men called, than others. And God in ordering it thus manifests his sovereignty: 1 Cor. i. 26, 27, 28, "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are."

4. In bestowing salvation on some who have had few advantages. God sometimes will bless weak means for producing astonishing effects, when more excellent means are not succeeded. God sometimes will withhold salvation from those who are the children of very pious parents, and bestow it on others, who have been brought up in wicked families. Thus we read of a good Abijah in the family of Jeroboam, and of a godly Hezekiah, the son of wicked Ahaz, and of a godly Josiah, the son of a wicked Amon. But on the contrary, of a wicked Amnon and Absalom, the sons of holy David, and that vile Manasseh, the son of good Hezekiah. Sometimes some, who have had eminent means of grace, are rejected, and left to perish, and others, under far less advantages, are saved. Thus the scribes and Pharisees, who had so much light and knowledge of the Scriptures, were mostly rejected, and the poor ignorant publicans saved. The greater part of those, among whom Christ was much conversant, and who heard him preach, and saw him work miracles from day to day, were left; and the woman of Samaria was taken, and many other Samaritans at the same time, who only heard Christ preach, as he occasionally passed through their city. So the woman of Canaan was taken, who was not of the country of the Jews, and but once saw Jesus Christ. So the Jews, who had seen and heard Christ, and saw his miracles, and with whom the apostles labored so much, were not saved

But the Gentiles, many of them, who, as it were, but transiently heard the glad tidings of salvation, embraced them, and were converted.

5. God exercises his sovereignty in calling some to salvation, who have been very heinously wicked, and leaving others, who have been moral and religious persons. The Pharisees were a very strict sect among the Jews. Their religion was extraordinary, Luke xviii. 11. They were not, as other men, extortioners, unjust, or adulterers. There was their morality. They fasted twice a week, and gave tithes of all that they possessed. There was their religion. But yet they were mostly rejected, and the publicans, and harlots, and openly vicious sort of people, entered into the kingdom of God before them, Matt. xxi. 31. The apostle describes his righteousness while a Pharisee, Philip iii. 6: "Touching the righteousness which is of the law, blameless." The rich young man, who came kneeling to Christ, saying, Good Master, what shall I do, that I may have eternal life, was a moral person. When Christ bade him keep the commandments, he said, and in his own view with sincerity, "All these have I kept from my youth up." He had obviously been brought up in a good family, and was a youth of such amiable manners and correct deportment, that it is said, "Jesus beholding him, loved him." Still he was left; while the thief, that was crucified with Christ, was chosen and called, even on the cross. God sometimes shows his sovereignty by showing mercy to the chief of sinners, on those who have been murderers, and profaners, and blasphemers. And even when they are old, some are called at the eleventh hour. God sometimes shows the sovereignty of his grace by showing mercy to some, who have spent most of their lives in the service of Satan, and have little left to spend in the service of God.

6. In saving some of those who seek salvation, and not others. Some who seek salvation, as we know both from Scripture and observation, are soon converted; while others seek a long time, and do not obtain at last. God helps some over the mountains and difficulties which are in the way; he subdues Satan, and delivers them from his temptations: but others are ruined by the temptations with which they meet. Some are never thoroughly awakened; while to others God is pleased to give thorough convictions. Some are left to backsliding hearts; others God causes to hold out to the end. Some are brought off from a confidence in their own righteousness; others never get over that obstruction in their way, as long as they live. And some are converted and saved, who never had so great strivings as some who, notwithstanding, perish.

IV. I come now to give the reasons, why God does thus exercise his sovereignty in the eternal salvation of the children of men.

1. It is agreeable to God's design in the creation of the universe to exercise every attribute, and thus to manifest the glory of each of them. God's design in the creation was to glorify himself, or to make a discovery of the essential glory of his nature. It was fit that infinite glory should shine forth; and it was God's original design to make a manifestation of his glory, as it is. Not that it was his design to manifest all his glory to the apprehension of creatures; for it is impossible that the minds of creatures should comprehend it. But it was his design to make a true manifestation of his glory, such as should represent every attribute. If God glorified one attribute, and not another, such manifestation of his glory would be defective; and the representation would not be complete. If all God's attributes are not manifested, the glory of none of them is manifested as it is: for the divine attributes reflect glory on one another. Thus if God's wisdom be manifested, and not his holiness, the glory

of his wisdom would not be manifested as it is; for one part of the glory of the attribute of divine wisdom is, that it is a holy wisdom. So if his holiness were manifested, and not his wisdom, the glory of his holiness would not be manifested as it is; for one thing which belongs to the glory of God's holiness is, that it is a wise holiness. So it is with respect to the attributes of mercy and justice. The glory of God's mercy does not appear as it is, unless it is manifested as a just mercy, or as a mercy consistent with justice. And so with respect to God's sovereignty, it reflects glory on all his other attributes. It is part of the glory of God's mercy, that it is sovereign mercy. So all the attributes of God reflect glory on one another. The glory of one attribute cannot be manifested, as it is, without the manifestation of another. One attribute is defective without another, and therefore the manifestation will be defective. Hence it was the will of God to manifest all his attributes. The declarative glory of God in Scripture is often called God's *name*, because it declares his nature. But if his name does not signify his nature as it is, or does not declare any attribute, it is not a true name. The sovereignty of God is one of his attributes, and a part of his glory. The glory of God eminently appears in his absolute sovereignty over all creatures, great and small. If the glory of a prince be his power and dominion, then the glory of God is his absolute sovereignty. Herein appears God's infinite greatness and highness above all creatures. Therefore it is the will of God to manifest his sovereignty. And his sovereignty, like his other attributes, is manifested in the exercise of it. He glorifies his power in the exercise of power. He glorifies his mercy in the exercise of mercy. So he glorifies his sovereignty in the exercise of sovereignty.

2. The more excellent the creature is over whom God is sovereign, and the greater the matter in which he so appears, the more glorious is his sovereignty. The sovereignty of God in his being sovereign over men, is more glorious than in his being sovereign over the inferior creatures. And his sovereignty over angels is yet more glorious than his sovereignty over men. For the nobler the creature is, still the greater and higher doth God appear in his sovereignty over it. It is a greater honor to a man to have dominion over men, than over beasts; and a still greater honor to have dominion over princes, nobles, and kings, than over ordinary men. So the glory of God's sovereignty appears in that he is sovereign over the souls of men, who are so noble and excellent creatures. God therefore will exercise his sovereignty over them. And the further the dominion of any one extends over another, the greater will be the honor. If a man has dominion over another only in some instances, he is not therein so much exalted, as in having absolute dominion over his life, and fortune, and all he has. So God's sovereignty over men appears glorious, that it extends to every thing which concerns them. He may dispose of them with respect to all that concerns them, according to his own pleasure. His sovereignty appears glorious, that it reaches their most important affairs, even the eternal state and condition of the souls of men. Herein it appears that the sovereignty of God is without bounds or limits, in that it reaches to an affair of such infinite importance. God, therefore, as it is his design to manifest his own glory, will and does exercise his sovereignty towards men, over their souls and bodies, even in this most important matter of their eternal salvation. He has mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardens.

APPLICATION.

1. Hence we learn how absolutely we are dependent on God in this great matter of the eternal salvation of our souls. We are dependent not only

on his wisdom to contrive a way to accomplish it, and on his power to bring it to pass, but we are dependent on his mere will and pleasure in the affair. We depend on the sovereign will of God for every thing belonging to it, from the foundation to the top-stone. It was of the sovereign pleasure of God, that he contrived a way to save any of mankind, and gave us Jesus Christ, his only-begotten Son, to be our Redeemer. Why did he look on us, and send us a Saviour, and not the fallen angels? It was from the sovereign pleasure of God. It was of his sovereign pleasure what means to appoint. His giving us the Bible, and the ordinances of religion, is of his sovereign grace. His giving those means to us rather than to others, his giving the awakening influences of his Spirit, and his bestowing saving grace, are all of his sovereign pleasure. When he says, "Let there be light in the soul of such a one," it is a word of infinite power and sovereign grace.

2. Let us with the greatest humility adore the awful and absolute sovereignty of God. As we have just shown, it is an eminent attribute of the Divine Being, that he is sovereign over such excellent beings as the souls of men, and that in every respect, even in that of their eternal salvation. The infinite greatness of God, and his exaltation above us, appears in nothing more, than in his sovereignty. It is spoken of in Scripture as a great part of his glory. Deut. xxxii. 39, "See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no God with me. I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal; neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand." Psal. cxv. 3, "Our God is in the heavens; he hath done whatsoever he pleased." Daniel iv. 34, 35, "Whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation. And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and he doeth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" Our Lord Jesus Christ praised and glorified the Father for the exercise of his sovereignty in the salvation of men. Matt. xi. 25, 26, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." Let us therefore give God the glory of his sovereignty, as adoring him, whose sovereign will orders all things, beholding ourselves as nothing in comparison with him. Dominion and sovereignty require humble reverence and honor in the subject. The absolute, universal, and unlimited sovereignty of God requires, that we should adore him with all possible humility and reverence. It is impossible that we should go to excess in lowliness and reverence of that Being who may dispose of us to all eternity, as he pleases.

3. Those who are in a state of salvation are to attribute it to sovereign grace alone, and to give all the praise to him, who maketh them to differ from others. Godliness is no cause for glorying, except it be in God. 1 Cor. i. 29, 30, 31, "That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." Such are not, by any means, in any degree to attribute their godliness, their safe and happy state and condition, to any natural difference between them and other men, or to any strength or righteousness of their own. They have no reason to exalt themselves in the least degree; but God is the being whom they should exalt. They should exalt God the Father, who chose them in Christ, who set his love upon them, and gave them salvation, before they were born, and even before the world was. If they inquire, why God set his love on them, and chose them rather than others, if they think they can see

any cause out of God, they are greatly mistaken. They should exalt God the Son, who bore their names on his heart, when he came into the world, and hung on the cross, and in whom alone they have righteousness and strength. They should exalt God the Holy Ghost, who of sovereign grace has called them out of darkness into marvellous light; who has by his own immediate and free operation, led them into an understanding of the evil and danger of sin, and brought them off from their own righteousness, and opened their eyes to discover the glory of God, and the wonderful riches of God in Jesus Christ, and has sanctified them, and made them new creatures. When they hear of the wickedness of others, or look upon vicious persons, they should think how wicked they once were, and how much they provoked God, and how they deserved forever to be left by him to perish in sin, and that it is only sovereign grace which has made the difference, 1 Cor. vi. 10. Many sorts of sinners are there enumerated; fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind. And then in the eleventh verse, the apostle tells them, "Such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." The people of God have the greater cause of thankfulness, more reason to love God, who hath bestowed such great and unspeakable mercy upon them of his mere sovereign pleasure.

4. Hence we learn what cause we have to admire the grace of God, that he should condescend to become bound to us by covenant; that he, who is naturally supreme in his dominion over us, who is our absolute proprietor, and may do with us as he pleases, and is under no obligation to us; that he should, as it were, relinquish his absolute freedom, and should cease to be merely sovereign in his dispensations towards believers, when once they have believed in Christ, and should, for their more abundant consolation, become bound. So that they can challenge salvation of this Sovereign; they can demand it through Christ, as a debt. And it would be prejudicial to the glory of God's attributes, to deny it to them; it would be contrary to his justice and faithfulness. What wonderful condescension is it in such a Being, thus to become bound to us, worms of the dust, for our consolation! He bound himself by his word, his promise. But he was not satisfied with that; but that we might have stronger consolation still, he hath bound himself by his oath. Heb. vi. 13, &c., "For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself; saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men verily swear by the greater; and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us. Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the vail; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a high priest forever after the order of Melchisedec."

Let us, therefore, labor to submit to the sovereignty of God. God insists, that his sovereignty be acknowledged by us, and that even in this great matter, a matter which so nearly and infinitely concerns us, as our own eternal salvation. This is the stumbling-block on which thousands fall and perish; and if we go on contending with God about his sovereignty, it will be our eternal ruin. It is absolutely necessary that we should submit to God, as our absolute sovereign,

and the sovereign over our souls; as one who may have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and harden whom he will.

5. And lastly. We may make use of this doctrine to guard those who seek salvation from two opposite extremes—presumption and discouragement. Do not presume upon the mercy of God, and so encourage yourself in sin. Many hear that God's mercy is infinite, and therefore think, that if they delay seeking salvation for the present, and seek it hereafter, that God will bestow his grace upon them. But consider, that though God's grace is sufficient, yet he is sovereign, and will use his own pleasure whether he will save you or not. If you put off salvation till hereafter, salvation will not be in your power. It will be as a sovereign God pleases, whether you shall obtain it or not. Seeing, therefore, that in this affair you are so absolutely dependent on God, it is best to follow his direction in seeking it, which is to hear his voice to-day: "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart." Beware also of discouragement. Take heed of despairing thoughts, because you are a great sinner, because you have persevered so long in sin, have backslidden, and resisted the Holy Ghost. Remember that, let your case be what it may, and you ever so great a sinner, if you have not committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, God can bestow mercy upon you without the least prejudice to the honor of his holiness, which you have offended, or to the honor of his majesty, which you have insulted, or of his justice which you have made your enemy, or of his truth, or of any of his attributes. Let you be what sinner you may, God can, if he pleases, greatly glorify himself in your salvation.

SERMON XXXV.

THE MOST HIGH A PRAYER HEARING GOD.

PSALM lxv. 2.—O thou that hearest prayer.

THIS psalm seems to be a psalm of praise to God for some remarkable answer of prayer, in the bestowment of some public mercy; or else was written on occasion of some special faith and confidence which David had, that his prayer would be answered. It is probable that this mercy bestowed, or expected to be bestowed, was some great public mercy, for which David had been very earnest and importunate, and had annexed a vow to his prayer; and that he had vowed a vow to God, that if he would grant him his request, he would do thus or thus, to praise and glorify God.

This seems to be the reason why he expresses himself as he does in the first verse of the psalm: "Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion; and unto thee shall the vow be performed;" i. e., that praise which I have vowed to give thee, on the answer of my prayer, waiteth for thee, to be given thee as soon as thou shalt have answered my prayer; and the vow which I made to thee shall be performed.

In the verse of the text, is a prophecy of the glorious times of the gospel, when "all flesh shall come" to the true God, as to *the God who heareth prayer;* which is here mentioned as what distinguishes the true God from the gods to whom the nations prayed and sought, those gods who cannot hear, and cannot answer their prayer. The time was coming when all flesh should come to that God who *doth hear prayer.*

DOCTRINE.

It is the character of the Most High, that he is a God that hears prayers.

I shall handle this point in the following method.

1. Show that the Most High is a God that hears prayer.
2. That he is eminently such a God.
3. That he is so distinguishingly, or that herein he is distinguished from all false gods.
4. Give the reasons of the doctrine.

I. The Most High is a God that hears prayer. Though he is infinitely above all, and stands in no need of creatures; yet he is graciously pleased to take a merciful notice of poor worms of the dust. He manifests and presents himself as the object of prayer, appears as sitting on a mercy seat, that men may come to him by prayer. When they stand in need of any thing, he allows them to come to him, and ask it of him; and he is wont to hear their prayers. God in his word hath given many promises that he will hear their prayers; the Scripture is full of examples of it; and God, in his dispensations towards his church, manifests himself to be a God that hears prayer.

Here it may be inquired, What is meant by God's hearing prayer? There are two things implied in it.

1. His accepting the supplications of those who pray to him. He accepts them when they come to him; their address to him is well taken, he is well pleased with it. He approves of their coming to him, and approves of their

asking such mercies as they request of him, and approves of their manner of doing it. He accepts of their prayers as an offering to him; he accepts the honor they do him in prayer.

2. He acts agreeably to his acceptance; and that two ways.

(1.) He sometimes manifests his acceptance of their prayers, by special discoveries of his mercy and sufficiency which he makes in prayer, or immediately after. God is sometimes pleased to manifest his acceptance of his people's prayers: he gives them special communion with him in prayer. While they are praying, he as it were comes to them, and discovers himself to them; gives them sweet views of his glorious grace, purity, sufficiency, and sovereignty; and enables them, with great quietness, to rest in him, and leave themselves and prayers with him, submitting to his will, and trusting in his grace and faithfulness. Such a manifestation God seems to have made of himself in prayer to HANNAH, which so quieted and composed her mind, and took away her sadness. We read in the first chapter of the first book of Samuel, how earnest she was, how exercised in her mind, and that she was a woman of a sorrowful spirit. But she came and poured out her soul before God, and spake out of the abundance of her complaint and grief; then we read, that she went away, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad, verse 13, which seems to have been from some refreshing discoveries which God had made of himself to her, to enable her quietly to submit to his will, and trust in his mercy, whereby God manifested his acceptance of her.

Not that I conclude that persons can hence argue, that the particular thing which they ask will certainly be given them, or that they can particularly foretell from it what God will do in answer to their prayers, any farther than he has promised in his word; yet God may, and doubtless does, thus testify his acceptance of their prayers, and from hence they may confidently rest in his providence, in his merciful ordering and disposing with respect to the thing which they ask.

(2.) God manifests his acceptance of their prayers, by answering them, by doing for them agreeably to their needs and supplications. He not only inwardly and spiritually discovers his mercy to their souls by his Spirit, but outwardly in his providence, by dealing mercifully with them in his providence, in consequence of their prayers, and by causing an agreeableness between his providence and their prayers.

I proceed now,

II. To show that it is eminently the character of the true God, that he is a God that hears prayer. This appears in several things.

1. In his giving such free access to him by prayer. God in his word manifests himself ready at all times to allow us to come to him. He sits on a throne of grace; and there is no vail to hide this throne, and keep us from it. The vail is rent from the top to the bottom; the way is open at all times, and we may go to God as often as we will. Although God be infinitely above us, yet we may come with boldness. Heb. iv. 14, 16, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." How wonderful is it that such worms as we should be allowed to come boldly at all times to so great a God!

Thus God indulges all kinds of persons, of all nations, Jews or Gentiles: 1 Cor. i. 2, 3, "Unto all that in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours; grace be unto you," &c. God allows such access to all of all ranks; none are so mean but that they may come boldly to God by prayer Yea God allows the most vile and unworthy; the greatest sinners

are allowed to come through Christ. And God not only allows, but encourages, and frequently invites them; yea, God manifests himself as delighting in being sought to by prayer. Prov. xv. 8, "The prayer of the upright is his delight;" and in Cant. ii. 14, we have Christ saying to the spouse, "O my dove, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice." The voice of the saints in prayer is sweet unto Christ; he delights to hear it.

The freeness of access by prayer that God allows them, appears wonderfully in his allowing them to be earnest and importunate; yea, to that degree as to take no denial, and as it were to give him no rest, and even encouraging them so to do. Isa. lxiii. 6, 7, "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest." Thus Christ encourages us, as it were, to weary God out by prayer, in the parable of the importunate widow and the unjust judge, Luke xviii. at the beginning. So, in the parable of the man who went to his friend at midnight, to borrow three loaves, Luke xi. 5, &c.

Thus God allowed Jacob to wrestle with him, yea, to be resolute in it. God allows men to use, as it were, a violence and obstinacy, if I may so speak, this way; as in Jacob, who, when God said, "Let me go," said, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." So it is spoken of with approbation, when men are violent for the kingdom of heaven, and take it by force. Thus Christ suffered the blind man to be most importunate and unceasing in his cries to him, Luke xviii. 38, 39: he continued crying, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me." Others who were present rebuked him, that he should hold his peace, looking upon it too great a boldness, and an indecent behavior towards Christ, for him thus to cry after him as he passed by. But Christ himself did not rebuke him, though he did not cease at the rebuke of the people, but cried so much the more. Christ was not offended at it, but stood and commanded him to be brought unto him, saying, "What wilt thou that I should do to thee?" And when the blind man had told him, Christ graciously granted his request.

The freedom of access that God gives in prayer, appears also in allowing us to come to him by prayer for every thing we need, both temporal and spiritual, whatever evil we need to be delivered from, or good we would obtain. Phil. iv. 6, "Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God."

2. That God is eminently of this character, appears in his hearing prayer so readily. He often manifests his readiness to hear prayer, by giving an answer so speedily, sometimes while they are yet speaking, and sometimes before they pray, when they only have a design of praying. So ready is God to hear prayer, that he takes notice of the first purpose of praying, and sometimes bestows mercy thereupon: Isa. lxv. 24, "And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." We read, that when Daniel was making humble and earnest supplication to God, God sent an angel to comfort him, and assure him of an answer, Dan. ix. 20–24.

And when God defers for the present to answer the prayer of faith, it is not from any backwardness in God to answer, but for the good of his people, sometimes that they may be better prepared for the mercy before they receive it, or because another time would be the best and fittest time on some other account. And even then, when God seems to delay an answer, the answer is indeed hastened, as in Luke xviii. 7, 8, "And shall not God avenge his own elect, that cry unto him day and night, though he bear long with them? I tell you, that he will avenge them speedily." Sometimes, when the blessing seems to tarry, God is even then at work to bring it about in the best time and best manner: Hab. ii. 3, "Though it tarry, wait for it; it will come, it will not tarry."

3. That the Most High is eminently one that hears prayer, appears by his giving so liberally in answer to prayer: James i. 5, 6, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not." Men often show their backwardness and lothness to give to those who ask of them, both by the scantiness of their gifts, and by upbraiding those who ask of them. They will be sure to put them in mind of these and those faults, when they give them any thing; but, on the contrary, God both gives liberally, and upbraids us not with our undeservings, when he gives.

God is plenteous and rich in his communications to those who call upon him. Psal. lxxxvi. 5, "For thou art good and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy unto all that call upon thee;" and Rom. x. 12, "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him."

Sometimes God not only gives the thing asked, but he gives more than is asked. So he did to Solomon: 1 Kings iii. 12, 13, "Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart, so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honor; so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee, all thy days." Yea, God will give more to his people than they can either ask or think, as is implied in that, Eph. iii. 20, "Now, unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."

4. That God is eminently of this character, appears by the greatness of the things which he hath often done in answer to prayer. Thus, when Esau was coming out against his brother Jacob, with four hundred men, without doubt fully resolved to cut him off, Jacob prayed to God, and God turned the heart of Esau, so that he met Jacob in a very friendly manner; as in Gen. xxxii. So in Egypt, at the prayer of Moses, God brought those dreadful plagues, and, at his prayer, removed them again. When Samson was ready to perish with thirst, he prayed to God, and God brought water out of a dry jaw-bone, for his supply, Judg. xv. 18, 19. And when he prayed, after his strength was departed from him, God strengthened him, so as to pull down the temple of Dagon on the Philistines; so that those whom he slew at his death were more than all those whom he slew in his life.

Joshua prayed to God, and said to the sun, "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon, and thou, moon, in the valley of Ajalon; and God heard his prayer, and caused the sun and moon to stand still accordingly. The prophet "Elijah was a man of like passions" with us; "and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit;" as the Apostle James observes, James v. 17, 18. So God confounded the army of Zerah, the Ethiopian, of a thousand thousand, in answer to the prayer of Asa, 2 Chron. xiv. 9, &c. And God sent an angel, and slew in one night a hundred and eighty thousand men of Sennacherib's army, in answer to Hezekiah's prayer, 2 Kings xix. 14, 15, 16, 19.

5. This truth appears, in that God is, as it were, overcome by prayer. When God is displeased by sin, and manifests his displeasure, and comes out against us in his providence, and seems to oppose and resist us; in such cases, God is, speaking after the manner of men, overcome by humble and fervent prayer. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much," James v. 16. It has a great power in it. Such a prayer hearing God is the Most High, that he graciously manifests himself as conquered by it. Thus Ja-

cob conquered in the wrestle which he had with God. God appeared to oppose Jacob in what he sought of him; he did, as it were, struggle against him, and to get away from him; yet Jacob was resolute, and overcame. Therefore God changed his name from Jacob to Israel; for, says he, "as a prince thou hast power with God and with men, and hast prevailed," Gen. xxxii. 28. A mighty prince indeed! to be great enough to overcome God: Hos. xii. 4, "Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed; he wept and made supplication unto him."

So Moses, from time to time, did in this sense overcome God by prayer. When his anger was provoked against Israel, and he appeared to be ready to consume them in his hot displeasure, Moses stood in the gap, and by his humble and earnest prayer and supplication averted the stroke of divine vengeance. This appears by Exod. xxxii. 9, &c., and by Numb. xiv. 11, &c.

III. Herein the Most High God is distinguished from false gods. The true God is the only God of this character; there is no other of whom it may be said, that *he heareth prayer.* Those false gods are not gods that hear prayer, upon three accounts.

1. For want of a capacity to know what those who worship them pray for. Many of those things that are worshipped as gods in the world, are things without life; many are idols made by their worshippers; they are mere stocks and stones, that know nothing. They are indeed made with ears; but they hear not the prayers of them that cry to them, let them cry ever so loudly: they have eyes; but they see not, &c., Psal. cxv. 5—9.

Others, though they are not the work of men's hands, yet are things without life. Thus, many worship the sun, moon, and stars, which, though glorious creatures, yet are not capable of knowing any thing of the wants and desires of those who pray to them.

Others worship some certain kinds of brute animals, as the Egyptians were wont to worship bulls, which, though they be not without life, yet are destitute of that reason whereby they would be capable of knowing the requests of their worshippers. Others worship devils, instead of the true God: 1 Cor. x. 20, "But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils." These, though they are beings of great powers and understandings, and great subtlety, have not that knowledge which is necessary to capacitate them fully to understand the state, circumstances, necessities, and desires of those who pray to them. No devil is capable of a perfect understanding of the circumstances and need of any one person, much less of attending to, and being thoroughly acquainted with, all who pray to them through the world.

But the true God perfectly knows the circumstances of every one that prays to him throughout the world; he perfectly knows the needs and desires of every one. If there be millions praying to him at once, in different parts of the world, it is no more difficult to him, who is infinite in knowledge, to take notice of all, and perfectly to be acquainted with every one, than of one alone. But it is not so with any other being but the Most High God.

God is so perfect in knowledge, that he doth not need to be informed by us, in order to a knowledge of our wants; for he knows what things we need before we ask him. The worshippers of false gods were wont to lift their voices and cry aloud, lest their gods should fail of hearing them, as Elijah tauntingly bid the worshippers of Baal do, 1 Kings xviii. 27. But the true God hears the silent petitions of his people. He needs not that we should cry aloud; yea, he knows and perfectly understands when we only pray in our hearts, as Hannah did, 1 Sam. i. 13

2. False gods are not prayer hearing gods, for want of power to answer prayer. Idols are but vanities and lies; in them is no help. As to power or knowledge, they are nothing; as the apostle says, 1 Cor. viii. 4, "An idol is nothing in the world." As to the images that are the works of men's hands, they are so far from having any power to answer prayer, or to help them that pray to them, that they are not able at all to act: "They have hands, and handle not; feet have they, but they walk not; neither speak they through their throat." They, therefore, that make them, and pray to them, are senseless and sottish, and make themselves stocks and stones, like unto them. Psal. cxv. 7, 8, and Jer. x. 5, "They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not. They must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil; neither also is it in them to do good." As to the hosts of heaven, the sun, moon, and stars, although mankind receive benefit by them, yet they act nothing voluntarily, but only by necessity of nature; therefore they have no power to do any thing in answer to prayers. And devils that are worshipped as gods, they are not able, if they had disposition, to make those happy who worship them, and can do nothing at all but only by divine permission, and as subject to the disposal of divine Providence.

False gods can none of them save those that pray to them; and therefore, when the children of Israel departed from the true God to idols, and were distressed by their enemies, and cried to God in their distress, God reproved them for their folly in worshipping false gods, by bidding them go and cry to the gods whom they had served, and let them deliver them in the time of their tribulation, Josh. x. 14. So God challenges those gods themselves, in Isa. xli. 23, 24: "Show us things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods; yea, do good or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together. Behold, ye are of nothing, and your work of nought: an abomination is he that chooseth you."

The false gods, instead of helping those who pray to them, cannot help themselves. The devils are miserable tormented spirits; they are bound in chains of darkness for their rebellion against the true God, and cannot deliver themselves.

3. False gods are not gods that hear prayer, for want of a disposition to help those who pray to them. As to those lifeless idols whom the Heathen worship, they are without both understanding and will. As to the devils, who in the dark places of the earth are worshipped as gods, they have no disposition to help those who cry to them; for they are cruel spirits; they are the mortal enemies of mankind, that thirst for their blood, and delight in nothing but their misery. They have no more disposition to help mankind, than a parcel of hungry wolves or lions would have to protect and help a flock of lambs. And those that worship and pray to them get not their good will by serving them: all the reward that Satan will give them, for the service which they do him, is to make a prey of them, and devour them.

I proceed now,

IV. To give the reasons of the doctrine; which I would do in answer to these two inquiries: 1. Why God requires prayer in order to the bestowment of mercies on men? 2. Why God is so ready to hear the prayers of men?

Inquiry 1. Why doth God require prayer in order to the bestowment of mercies? To this I shall answer both negatively and affirmatively.

(1.) Negatively. 1. It is not in order that God may be informed of our wants or desires. God is omniscient, and with respect to his knowledge, unchangeable; his knowledge cannot be added to. God never is informed of any

thing, nor gains any knowledge by information. He knows what we want a thousand times more perfectly than we do ourselves. He knows what things we have need of before we ask him: he knows our desires before we declare them by prayer.

2. Nor is it to dispose and incline God to show mercy: for though, in speaking after the manner of men, God is sometimes in Scripture represented as though he were moved and persuaded by the prayers and cries of his people; yet it is not to be thought that God is properly moved or made willing by our prayers; for it is no more possible that there should be any new inclination or will in God, than new knowledge. The mercy of God is not moved or drawn by any thing in the creature; but the spring of God's beneficence is within himself only; he is self moved; and whatsoever mercy he bestows, the reason and ground of it is not to be sought for in the creature, but in God's own good pleasure. It is the will of God to bestow mercy in this way, viz., in answer to prayer, when he designs beforehand to bestow mercy, yea, when he has promised it; as Ezek. xxxvi. 36, 37, "I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it. Thus saith the Lord, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." God has been pleased to constitute prayer to be an antecedent to the bestowment of mercy; and he is pleased to bestow mercy in consequence of prayer as though he were prevailed on by prayer.

Yet God is not in fact prevailed on or made willing by prayer. But when he shows mercy in answer to prayer, his intention of mercy is not the effect of the prayer; but that the people of God are stirred up to prayer, is the effect of God's intention to show mercy. Because God intends to show mercy, therefore he pours out the spirit of grace and supplication.

(2.) Affirmatively. There may be two reasons given why God requires prayer in order to the bestowment of mercy; one especially respects God, and the other respects ourselves.

1. With respect to God, prayer is but a sensible acknowledgment of our dependence on God, to his glory. As God hath made all things for his own glory, so he will be glorified and acknowledged by his creatures; and it is fit that he should require this of those who would be the subjects of his mercy. That we, when we stand in need of any mercy of God, or desire to receive any mercy from him, should go to God, and humbly supplicate the divine Being for the bestowment of that mercy, is but a suitable acknowledgment of our dependence on the power and mercy of God for that which we need, and but a suitable honor paid to the great Author and Fountain of all good.

2. With respect to ourselves, God requires prayer of us in order to the bestowment of mercy, because it tends to prepare us for the receipt of mercy Fervent prayer many ways tends to prepare the heart for the receipt of the mercy prayed for. Hereby is excited a sense of our need of the mercy, and of the value of the mercy which we seek, and at the same time are excited earnest desires of it; whereby the mind is more prepared to prize it, and rejoice in it when bestowed, and to be thankful for it. Prayer, with that confession which should be in prayer, may be the occasion of a sense of our unworthiness of the mercy we seek; and the placing of ourselves in the immediate presence of God may make us sensible of his majesty, and we may be humbled before him, and be fitted to receive mercy of him. Our prayer to God may excite in us a suitable sense and consideration of our dependence on God for the mercy we ask, and a suitable exercise of faith in God's sufficiency, that so we may be prepared to glorify his name when the mercy is received.

Inquiry 2. Why is God so ready to hear the prayers of men? To this I answer:

1. Because God is a God of infinite grace and mercy. It is indeed a very wonderful thing, that so great a God should be so ready to hear our prayers, though we are so despicable and unworthy; that he should give free access at all times to every one; should allow us to be as importunate as we will, without esteeming it any indecent boldness; should hear all sincere prayers put up to him; should be so ready to hear, and so rich in mercy to them that call upon him; that worms of the dust should have such power with God by prayer; that God should do such great things in answer to their prayers, and should show himself, as it were, overcome by them. This is very wonderful, when we consider the distance between God and us, and consider how we have provoked God by our sins, and how unworthy we are of the least gracious notice.

And it can be resolved into nothing else but infinite mercy and grace. It cannot be from any need that God stands in of us; for our goodness extendeth not to him. Neither can it be from any thing in us to incline the heart of God to us: it cannot be from any worthiness in our prayers, which are in themselves very miserable polluted things. But it is because God delights in mercy and condescension. He is herein infinitely distinguished from all other gods: he is the great fountain of all good, from whom goodness flows as light from the sun.

2. We have a glorious Mediator, who has prepared the way, that our prayers may be heard consistently with the honor of God's justice and Majesty. Not only has God in himself mercy sufficient for this, but the Mediator has provided that this mercy may be exercised consistently with the honor of God. Through him we may come to God, and God may show mercy to us: he is the way, the truth, and the life; no man can come to the Father but by him. This Mediator hath done three things to make way for the hearing of our prayers.

(1.) He hath by his blood made atonement for sin, so that our guilt need not stand in the way, as a separation wall between God and us, and that our sins might not be a cloud through which our prayers cannot pass; and by his atonement he hath made the way to the throne of grace open. God would have been infinitely gracious if there had been no Mediator; but the way to the mercy seat would have been blocked up. But Christ hath removed whatever stood in the way. The vail which was before the mercy seat "is rent from the top to the bottom," by the death of Christ. If it had not been for the death of Christ, our guilt would have remained as a wall of brass, to hinder our approach. But all is removed by his blood, Heb. x. 17, &c.

(2.) Christ has, by his obedience, purchased that the prayers of those who believe in him should be heard. He has not only removed the obstacles to our prayers, but has merited a hearing of them. His merits are the incense that is offered with the prayers of the saints, which renders them a sweet savor to God, and acceptable in his sight. Hence the prayers of the saints have such power with God; hence the prayer of a poor worm of the dust had such power with God, that in answer God stopped the sun in his course for about the space of a whole day; hence such unworthy creatures as we are able to overcome God; hence Jacob as a prince had power with God and prevailed. Our prayers would be of no account, and of no avail with God, were it not for the merits of Christ; for in themselves they are miserable worthless things, and might justly be odious and abominable to God.

(3.) Christ enforces the prayers of his people, by his intercession at the right hand of God in heaven. He hath entered for us into the holy of holies, with the incense which he hath provided, and there he makes continual intercession for all that come to God in his name; so that their prayers come to God the Father through his hands, if I may so say; which is represented in Rev. viii. 3,

4, " And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which is before the throne. And the smoke of the incense which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand."

This was typified of old by the priest's offering incense in the temple, at the time when the multitude of the people were offering up their prayers to God; as Luke i. 10, " And the whole multitude of the people were praying without, at the time of incense."

APPLICATION.

I. Hence we may learn, how highly we are privileged, in that we have the Most High God revealed to us, who is a God that heareth prayer. The greater part of mankind are destitute of this privilege; they are ignorant of this God; the gods whom they worship are not prayer hearing gods. Whatever their necessities are, whatever calamities or sorrows they are the subjects of, if they meet with grievous and heavy afflictions, wherein they cannot help themselves, and man is unable to help them, they have no prayer hearing God to whom they may go. If they go to the gods whom they worship, and cry to them ever so earnestly, it will be in vain. They worship either lifeless things, that can neither help them, nor know that they need help; or wicked cruel spirits, who are their enemies, and wish nothing but their misery, and who, instead of helping them, are from day to day working their ruin, and watching over them, as a hungry lion watches over his prey.

How are we distinguished from them, in that we have the true God made known to us; a God of infinite grace and mercy; a God full of compassion to the miserable, who is ready to pity us under all our troubles and sorrows, to hear our cries, and give us all that relief which we need; a God who delights in mercy, and is rich to all that call upon him! How highly privileged are we, in that we have the holy word of this same God, to direct us how to come to him, and seek mercy of him! And whatever difficulties or distress we are in, we may go with confidence and great encouragement to him with all our difficulties and complaints. What a comfort may this be to us! And what reason have we to rejoice in our own privileges, highly to prize them, and to bless God that he hath been so merciful to us, as to give us his word, and reveal himself to us; and that he hath not left us to cry for help to stocks, and stones, and devils, as he has left many thousands of others!

Objection. I have often prayed to God for these and those mercies, and God has not heard my prayers.

To this I shall answer several things.

(1.) It is no argument, that God is not a prayer hearing God, if he give not to men what they ask of him, to consume upon their lusts. Oftentimes, when men pray for these and those temporal good things, they desire them chiefly to gratify their lusts. They desire them for no good end, but only to gratify their pride or sensuality. They pray for worldly good things chiefly from a worldly spirit: it is because they make too much of an idol of the world; and if so, it is no wonder that God doth not hear their prayers: James iv. 3, " Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, to consume it upon your lusts."

It is no argument that God is not a prayer hearing God, that he will not grant your request, when you ask him to give you something of which you will make an idol, and set it up in opposition to him; or that he will not hear you,

when you ask of him these and those things to use as weapons of warfare against him, or as instruments to serve his enemies. No wonder that God will not hear you, when you pray for silver, or gold, or wool, or flax, to offer them to Baal. If God should hear such prayers, he would act as his own enemy, inasmuch as he would bestow on his enemies the things which they desire out of enmity against him, and to use against him as his enemies, and to serve his enemies.

(2.) It is no argument that God is not a prayer hearing God, that he heareth not *insincere* and *unbelieving* prayers. How can we expect that God should have any respect to that which has no sincerity in it? God looketh not at words, but at the heart; and it is fit that he should do so. If men's prayers be not hearty, if they pray only in words, and not in heart, what are their prayers good for? And why should that God who searches the heart and tries the reins have any respect to them?

Sometimes men do nothing but dissemble in their prayers; and when they do so, it is no argument that God is ever the less a prayer hearing God, that he doth not hear such prayers; for it is no argument of want of mercy. Sometimes men pray for that in words which they really desire not in their hearts. Sometimes men pray to God that he would purge them from sin, when at the same time they show by their practice that they do not desire to be purged from sin, but love sin, and choose it, and are utterly averse to parting with it. So they will pray for other spiritual blessings, of which they have no real desire. In like manner they often dissemble in the pretence and show, which they make in their prayers, of a dependence on God for mercies, and of a sense of his sufficiency to supply them. In our coming to God, and praying to him for such and such things, there is a show that we are sensible that we are dependent on him for them, and that he is sufficient to give them to us. But men sometimes seem to pray, who are not sensible of their dependence on God, nor do they think him to be sufficient to supply them. For some things that they go to God for, they all the while trust in themselves; and for other things they have no confidence in God.

Another way in which men often dissemble is, in seeming to pray and to be supplicants in words, when in heart they pray not, but challenge and demand. They show in words as though they were beggars; but in heart they come as creditors, and look on God as their debtor. In words they seem to ask these and those things as the fruit of free grace; but in heart they account it would be hard, unjust, and cruel, if God should deny them. In words they seem humble and submissive, but in heart they are proud and contentious; there is no prayer but in their words.

It doth not render God at all the less a prayer hearing God, that he distinguishes, as an all-seeing God, between real prayers and pretended ones. Such prayers as those which I have just now been mentioning, are not worthy of the name of prayers; and they are so accounted in the eyes of him who searches the heart, and sees things as they are. Nor would men account such things to be prayers, any more than the talk of a parrot, that knows not what it says, were it not that they judge by the outward appearance.

All prayer that is not the prayer OF FAITH, is insincere; for prayer is a show or manifestation of dependence on God, and trust in his sufficiency and mercy. Therefore, where this trust or FAITH is wanting, there is no prayer in the sight of God. And however God is sometimes pleased to grant the requests of those who have no FAITH, yet he has not obliged himself so to do; nor is it an argument of his not being a prayer hearing God, when he hears them not.

(3.) It is no argument that God is not a prayer hearing God, that he ex-

ercises his own wisdom as to the time and manner of answering prayers. Some of God's people are sometimes ready to think, that God doth not hear their prayers, because he doth not answer them at the times when they expected; when indeed God doth hear them and will answer them, in the time and way to which his own wisdom directs.

The business of prayer is not to direct God, who is infinitely wise, and needs not any of our directions, who knows what is best for us ten thousand times better than we, and knows what time and what way are best. It is fit that God should answer prayer, as an infinitely wise God, in the exercise of his own wisdom, and not ours. God will deal as a father with us, in answering our requests. But a child is not to expect that the father's wisdom will be subject to his; nor ought he to desire it, but should esteem it a privilege, that the parent who takes care of him, and provides for him, is wiser than he, and will provide for him according to his own wisdom.

As to particular temporal blessings for which we pray, it is no argument that God is not a prayer hearing God, that he bestows them not upon us; for it may be that God sees the things for which we pray not to be best for us. If so, it would be no mercy in him to bestow them upon us, but a judgment. Such things, therefore, ought always to be asked with submission to the divine will.

But God can answer prayer, though he bestow not the very thing for which we pray. He can sometimes better answer the lawful desires and good end we have in prayer another way. If our end be our own good and happiness, God can perhaps better answer that end in bestowing something else than in the bestowment of that very thing which we ask. And if the main good we aim at in our prayer be attained, our prayer is answered, though not in the bestowment of the individual thing which we ask. And so that may still be true which was asserted in the doctrinal part, viz., *that God always hears the prayer* OF FAITH God never once failed of hearing a *sincere* and *believing* prayer; and those promises forever hold good, "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

2. The *second use* may be, of reproof to those that neglect the duty of prayer. If we enjoy so great a privilege as to have the true God, who is a prayer hearing God, revealed to us, how great will be our folly and inexcusableness, if we neglect the privilege, make no use of it, and deprive ourselves of the advantage of it, by not seeking this God by prayer. They are hereby reproved who neglect the great duty of secret prayer, which is more expressly required in the word of God than any other kind of prayer. What account can those persons give of themselves, who neglect so known a duty? It is impossible that any among us should be ignorant of this command of God. How daring, therefore, is their wickedness, who live in the neglect of this duty, if any such there be among us! And what can they answer to their Judge, when he shall call them to an account for it?

Here I shall briefly say something to an EXCUSE which some may be ready to make for themselves. Some may be ready to say, *If I do pray, my prayer will not be the prayer of faith, because I am in a natural condition, and have no faith.*

ANSWER 1. This excuses not from obedience to a plain command of God. The command is to all to whom the command shall come. God not only directs godly persons to pray, but others also. In the beginning of the second chapter of Proverbs, God directs all persons to cry after wisdom, and to lift up their

voices for understanding, in order to their obtaining the fear and knowledge of God; and in James i. 5, the apostle says, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God;" and Peter directed *Simon Magus* to repent and pray God, if perhaps the thought of his heart might be forgiven him, Acts viii. 22. Therefore, when God says, do thus or thus, it is not for us to make excuses, but we must do the thing required.

Answer 2. God is pleased sometimes to answer the prayers of unbelievers. Indeed he hears not their prayers from any goodness or acceptableness that there is in their prayers, or because of any true respect to him manifested in them, for there is none; nor has he obliged himself to answer such prayers; yet he is pleased sometimes, of his sovereign mercy, to pity wicked men, and hear their cries. Thus he heard the cries of the Ninevites, Jonah chap. iii. So he heard the prayer of Ahab, 1 Kings xxi. 27, 28.

Though there be no regard to God in their prayers, yet God, of his infinite grace, is pleased to have respect to their desires of their own happiness, and to grant their requests. God may, and sometimes does, hear the cries of wicked men, as he hears the hungry ravens, when they cry, Psalm cxlvii. 9, and as he opens his bountiful hand, and satisfies the desires of every living thing, Psalm cxlv. 16. Besides, the prayers of sinners, though they have no goodness in them, yet are made a means of a preparation for mercy.

3. The *last use* shall be of exhortation. Seeing we have such a prayer hearing God as we have heard, let us be much employed in the duty of prayer. Let us pray with all prayer and supplication. Let us live prayerful lives, continuing instant in prayer, watching thereunto with all perseverance; praying without ceasing, praying always, and not fainting; and not praying in a dull, cold, and lifeless manner, but *wrestling* with God in prayer. I shall particularly at this time exhort to two things.

(1.) Let us pray for others, as well as for ourselves. God hath in his word manifested himself to be especially well pleased with hearty intercessory prayers, or prayers for our fellow creatures. 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2, 3, "I exhort, therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for *all men;* for kings, &c.; for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour." It is especially acceptable to God, as such prayers, when sincere, are an expression of a spirit of Christian charity, which is a grace peculiarly becoming Christians, and acceptable to God, as may be seen by what is said of it in 1 Cor. xiii.

(2.) Let us especially be earnest with God in our prayers, for the outpouring of his Spirit both on ourselves and others. We have not such encouragement in Scripture to pray for any other blessing, as we have to pray for this blessing. It is the greatest of all mercies; yet God hath given such encouragement to pray for no other mercy, as he hath for this mercy. See Luke xi. 13, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father *give the Holy Spirit* to them that ask him?" Though it be the greatest mercy, yet God is most ready to bestow it of any whatsoever. We ought therefore most earnestly to pray for the outpouring of God's Spirit on our own souls, on others in whom we are particularly concerned, on the people among whom we dwell, and on the whole land and whole earth. We are directed to pray for this with the greatest possible importunity in the forementioned place, Isaiah lxii. 6, 7: "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."

SERMON XXXVI.

THE TRUE CHRISTIAN'S LIFE, A JOURNEY TOWARDS HEAVEN.

HEBREWS xi. 13, 14.—And confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things, declare plainly that they seek a country.

THE apostle is here setting forth the excellencies of the grace of faith, by the glorious effects and happy issue of it in the saints of the Old Testament. He had spoken in the preceding part of the chapter particularly of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Jacob. Having enumerated those instances, he takes notice that "these all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers," &c.

In these words the apostle seems to have a more particular respect to Abraham and Sarah, and their kindred that came with them from Haran, and from Ur of the Chaldees, by the 15th verse, where the apostle says, "and truly if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned." It was they that upon God's call left their own country.

Two things may be observed in the text.

1. What these saints confessed of themselves, viz., "that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."

Thus we have a particular account concerning Abraham: "I am a stranger and a sojourner with you," Gen. xxiii. 4. And it seems to have been the general sense of the patriarchs, by what Jacob says to Pharaoh: "And Jacob said to Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage," Gen. xlvii. 9. "I am a stranger and a sojourner with thee, as all my fathers were," Psal. xxxix. 12.

2. The inference that the apostle draws from hence, viz., that they sought another country as their home: "For they that say such things, declare plainly, that they seek a country." In confessing that they were strangers, they plainly declared, that this is not their country; that this is not the country where they are at home. And in confessing themselves to be pilgrims, they declared plainly, that this is not their settled abode; but that they have respect to some other country, that they seek and are travelling to as their home.

DOCTRINE.

This life ought so to be spent by us, as to be only a journey towards heaven.

Here I would observe,

I. *That we ought not to rest in the world and its enjoyments, but should desire heaven.*

This our hearts should be chiefly upon and engaged about. We should *seek first the kingdom of God*, Matt. vi. 33. He that is on a journey, seeks the place that he is journeying to. We ought above all things to desire a heavenly happiness: to go to heaven, and there be with God, and dwell with Jesus Christ. If we are surrounded with many outward enjoyments, and things that are very

comfortable to us; if we are settled in families, and have those good friends and relations that are very desirable; if we have companions whose society is delightful to us; if we have children that are pleasant and hopeful, and in whom we see many promising qualifications; if we live by good neighbors; have much of the respect of others; have a good name; are generally beloved where we are known; and have comfortable and pleasant accommodations; yet we ought not to take our rest in these things. We should not be willing to have these things for our portion, but should seek a higher happiness in another world. We should not merely seek something else in addition to these things, but should be so far from resting in them, that we should choose and desire to leave these things for heaven; to go to God and Christ there. We should not be willing to live here always, if we could, in the same strength and vigor of body and mind as when in youth, or in the midst of our days; and always enjoy the same pleasure, and dear friends, and other earthly comforts. We should choose and desire to leave them all in God's due time, that we might go to heaven, and there have the enjoyment of God.—We ought to possess them, enjoy and make use of them, with no other view or aim, but readily to quit them whenever we are called to it, and to change them for heaven. And when we are called away from them, we should go cheerfully and willingly.

He that is going a journey, is not wont to rest in what he meets with that is comfortable and pleasing on the road. If he passes along through pleasant places, flowery meadows, or shady groves; he does not take up his content in these things. He is content only to take a transient view of these pleasant objects as he goes along. He is not enticed by these fine appearances to put an end to his journey, and leave off the thought of proceeding: no; but his journey's end is in his mind; that is the great thing that he aims at. So if he meets with comfortable and pleasant accommodations on the road at an inn, yet he does not rest there; he entertains no thoughts of settling there. He considers that these things are not his own, and that he is but a stranger; that that is not allotted for his home. And when he has refreshed himself, or tarried but for a night, he is for leaving these accommodations, and going forward, and getting onward towards his journey's end. And the thoughts of coming to his journey's end, are not at all grievous to him. He does not desire to be travelling always and never come to his journey's end; the thoughts of that would be discouraging to him. But it is pleasant to him to think, that so much of the way is gone, that he is now nearer home; and that he shall presently be there; and the toil and fatigue of his journey will be over.

So should we thus desire heaven so much more than the comforts and enjoyments of this life, that we should long to change these things for heaven. We should wait with earnest desire for the time when we shall arrive at our journey's end. The apostle mentions it as an encouraging, comfortable consideration to Christians, when they draw nigh their happiness.—"Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."

Our hearts ought to be loose to these things, as it is with a man that is on a journey. However comfortable enjoyments are, yet we ought to keep our hearts so loose from them, as cheerfully to part with them, whenever God calls. "But this I say, brethren, the time is short. It remaineth that both they that have wives, be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away," 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30, 31.

We ought to look upon these things as only lent to us for a little while, to

serve a present turn; but we should set our hearts on heaven as our inheritance forever.

II. *We ought to seek heaven, by travelling in the way that leads thither.*

The way that leads to heaven is the way of holiness. We should choose and desire to travel thither in this way and in no other. We should part with all those sins, those carnal appetites that are as weights, that will tend to hinder us in our travelling towards heaven. "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race set before us," Heb. xii. 1. However pleasant any practice, or the gratification of any appetite may be, we must lay it aside, cast it away; if it be any hinderance, and stumbling-block in the way to heaven.

We should travel on in a way of obedience to all God's commands, even the difficult as well as the easy commands. We should travel on in a way of self-denial; denying all our sinful inclinations and interests. The way to heaven is ascending; we must be content to travel up hill, though it be hard and tiresome, though it be contrary to the natural tendency and bias of our flesh that tends downward to the earth. We should follow Christ in the path that he has gone in. The way that he travelled in was the right way to heaven. We should take up our cross and follow him. We should travel along in the same way of meekness and lowliness of heart; in the same way of obedience and charity, and diligence to do good; and patience under afflictions. The way to heaven is a heavenly life; we must be travelling towards heaven in a way of imitation of those that are in heaven. In imitation of the saints and angels there, in their holy employment, in their way of spending their time, in loving, adoring, serving, and praising God and the Lamb. This is the path that we ought to prefer before all others, if we could have any other that we might choose. If we could go to heaven in a way of carnal living, in the way of the enjoyment and gratification of our lusts, we should rather prefer a way of holiness and conformity to the spiritual self-denying rules of the gospel.

III. *We should travel on in this way in a laborious manner.*

The going of long journeys is attended with toil and fatigue; especially if the journey be through a wilderness. Persons, in such a case, expect no other than to suffer hardships and weariness in travelling over mountains and through bad places.

So we should travel in this way of holiness, in a laborious manner, improving our time and strength to surmount the difficulties and obstacles that are in the way. The land that we have to travel through is a wilderness; there are many mountains, rocks, and rough places that we must go over in the way; and there is a necessity that we should lay out our strength.

IV. *Our whole lives ought to be spent in travelling this road.*

1. We ought to begin early. This should be the first concern and business that persons engage in when they come to be capable of acting in the world in doing any business. When they first set out in the world, they should set out on this journey. And,

2. We ought to travel on in this way with assiduity. It ought to be the work of every day to travel on towards heaven. We should often be thinking of our journey's end; and not only be thinking of it, but it should be our daily work to travel on in the way that leads to it.

As he that is on a journey is often thinking on the place that he is going to, and it is his care and business every day to get along; to improve his time, to get towards his journey's end. He spends the day in it; it is the work of the day, whilst the sun serves him. And when he has rested in the night, he gets

up in the morning, and sets out again on his journey; and so from day to day, till he has got to his journey's end. Thus should heaven be continually in our thought; and the immediate entrance or passage to it, viz., death, should be present with us. And it should be a thing that we familiarize to ourselves; and so it should be our work every day, to be preparing for death, and travelling heavenward.

2. We ought to persevere in this way as long as we live: we should hold out in it to the end.

"Let us run with patience the race that is set before us," Heb. xii. 1. Though the road be difficult, and it be a toilsome thing to travel it, we must hold out with patience, and be content to endure the hardships of it. If the journey be long, yet we must not stop short; we should not give out in discouragement, but hold on till we are arrived at the place we seek. We ought not to be discouraged with the length and difficulties of the way, as the children of Israel were, and be for turning back again. All our thought and design should be to get along. Whe should be engaged and resolved to press forward till we arrive.

V. *We ought to be continually growing in holiness; and in that respect coming nearer and nearer to heaven.*

He that is travelling towards a place comes nearer and nearer to it continually. So we should be endeavoring to come nearer to heaven, in being more heavenly; becoming more and more like the inhabitants of heaven, and more and more as we shall be when we have arrived there, if ever that be.

We should endeavor continually to be more and more, as we hope to be in heaven, in respect of holiness and conformity to God. And with respect to light and knowledge, we should labor to be growing continually in the knowledge of God and Christ, and clear views of the glory of God, the beauty of Christ, and the excellency of divine things, as we come nearer and nearer to the beatific vision.

We should labor to be continually growing in divine love; that this may be an increasing flame in our hearts, till our hearts ascend wholly in this flame. We should be growing in obedience, and in heavenly conversation; that we may do the will of God on earth as the angels do in heaven.

We ought to be continually growing in comfort and spiritual joy; in sensible communion with God and Jesus Christ. Our path should be as "the shining light, that shines more and more to the perfect day," Prov. iv. 18.

We ought to be hungering and thirsting after righteousness; after an increase in righteousness. "As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby," 1 Pet. ii. 2. And we should make the perfection of heaven our mark. We should rest in nothing short of this, but be pressing towards this mark, and laboring continually to be coming nearer and nearer to it. "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things that are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," Phil. iii. 13, 14.

VI. *All other concerns of life ought to be entirely subordinate to this.*

As when a man is on a journey, all the steps that he takes are in order to further him on his journey; and subordinate to that aim of getting to his journey's end. And if he carries money or provision with him, it is to supply him in his journey. So we ought wholly to subordinate all our other business, and all our temporal enjoyments to this affair of travelling to heaven. Journeying towards heaven, ought to be our only work and business, so that all we have

and do, should be in order to that. When we have worldly enjoyments we should be ready to part with them, whenever they are in the way of our going toward heaven. We should sell all this world for heaven. When once any thing we have becomes a clog and hinderance to us, in the way heavenward, we should quit it immediately. When we use our worldly enjoyments and possessions, it should be with such a view and in such a manner as to further us in our way heavenward. Thus we should eat, and drink, and clothe ourselves. And thus should we improve the conversation and enjoyment of friends.

And whatever business we are setting about; whatever design we are engaged in, we should inquire with ourselves, whether this business or undertaking will forward us in our way to heaven? And if not, we should quit our design.

We ought to make use of worldly enjoyments, and pursue worldly business in such a degree and manner as shall have the best tendency to forward our journey heavenward, and no otherwise.

I shall offer some reasons of the doctrine.

I. *This world is not our abiding place.*

Our continuance in this world is but very short. Man's days on the earth are as a shadow. It was never designed by God this world should be our home. We were not born into this world for that end. Neither did God give us these temporal things that we are accommodated with for that end. If God has given us good estates; if we are settled in families, and God has given us children, or other friends that are very pleasant to us; it is with no such view or design, that we should be furnished and provided for here, as for a settled abode; but with a design that we should use them for the present, and then leave them again in a very little time.

If we are called to any secular business; or if we are charged with the care of a family; with the instruction and education of children, we are called to these things with a design that we shall be called from them again, and not to be our everlasting employment. So that if we improve our lives to any other purpose, than as a journey towards heaven, all our labor will be lost. If we spend our lives in the pursuit of a temporal happiness: if we set our hearts on riches, and seek happiness in them; if we seek to be happy in sensual pleasures; if we spend our lives in seeking the credit and esteem of men; the good-will and respect of others; if we set our hearts on our children, and look to be happy in the enjoyment of them, in seeing them well brought up, and well settled, &c. All these things will be of little significancy to us. Death will blow up all our hopes and expectations, and will put an end to our enjoyment of these things. *The places that have known us will know us no more:* and the eye that has seen us shall see us no more. We must be taken away forever from all these things; and it is uncertain when; it may be soon after we have received them, and are put into the possession of them. It may be in the midst of our days and from the midst of our enjoyments. And then where will be all our worldly employments and enjoyments, when we are laid in the silent grave! "So man lieth down and riseth not again, till the heavens be no more," Job xiv. 12.

II. *The future world was designed to be our settled and everlasting abode.*

Here it was intended that we should be fixed; and here alone is a lasting habitation, and a lasting inheritance and enjoyment to be had. We are designed for this future world. We are to be in two states; the one in this world, which is an imperfect state; the other, in the world to come. The present state is short and transitory; but our state in the other world is everlasting. When we

go into another world, there we must be to all eternity. And as we are here at first, so we must be without change.

Our state in the future world, therefore, being eternal, is of so exceedingly greater importance than our state in this world, that it is worthy that our state here, and all our concerns in this world should be wholly subordinate to it.

III. *Heaven is that place alone where our highest end and highest good is to be obtained.*

God hath made us for himself. *Of God, and through God, and to God are all things.* Therefore then do we attain to our highest end when we are brought to God: but that is by being brought to heaven; for that is God's throne; that is the place of his special presence, and of his residence. There is but a very imperfect union with God to be had in this world; a very imperfect knowledge of God in the midst of abundance of darkness; a very imperfect conformity to God, mingled with abundance of enmity and estrangement. Here we can serve and glorify God, but in an exceeding imperfect manner; our service being mingled with much sin and dishonor to God.

But when we get to heaven (if ever that be), there we shall be brought to a perfect union with God. There we shall have clear views of God. We shall see face to face, and know as we are known. There we shall be fully conformed to God, without any remainder of sin. We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. There we shall serve God perfectly. We shall glorify him in an exalted manner, and to the utmost of the powers and capacity of our nature. Then we shall perfectly give up ourselves to God. Then will our hearts be pure and holy offerings to God; offered all in a flame of divine love.

In heaven alone is the attainment of our highest good. God is the highest good of the reasonable creature. The enjoyment of him is our proper happiness; and is the only happiness with which our souls can be satisfied.

To go to heaven, fully to enjoy God, is infinitely better than the most pleasant accommodations here. Better than fathers and mothers, husbands, wives or children, or the company of any, or all earthly friends. These are but shadows; but the enjoyment of God is the substance. These are but scattered beams; but God is the sun. These are but streams; but God is the fountain. These are but drops; but God is the ocean.*

Therefore it becomes us to spend this life only as a journey towards heaven, as it becomes us to make the seeking our highest end and proper good, the whole work of our lives; and we should subordinate all other concerns of life to it. Why should we labor for any thing else; or set our hearts on any thing else but that which is our proper end and true happiness?

IV. *Our present state, and all that belongs to it, are designed by him that made all things, to be wholly in order to another world.*

This world was made for a place of preparation for another world. Man's mortal life was given him only here, that he might be prepared for his fixed state. And all that God has here given us, is given to this purpose. The sun shines upon us; the rain falls upon us; the earth yields her increase to us; civil and ecclesiastical affairs, family affairs, and all our personal concerns are designed and ordered in a subordination to a future world, by the maker and disposer of all things. They ought, therefore, to be subordinate to this by us.

APPLICATION.

I. *In the use of instruction.*

1. *This doctrine may teach us moderation in our mourning for the loss of dear friends, who, while they lived, improved their lives to right purposes.*

If they lived a holy life, then their lives were a journey towards heaven. And why should we be immoderate in mourning when they are got to their journey's end? Death to them, though it appears to us with a frightful aspect, is a great blessing. Their end is happy, and better than their beginning: "The day of their death is better to them than the day of their birth," Eccl. vii. 1. While they lived they desired heaven, and chose it above this world, or any of the enjoyments of it. They earnestly sought and longed for heaven; and why should we grieve that they have obtained it?

Now they have got to heaven, they have got home. They never were at home before. They have got to their Father's house. They find more comfort a thousand times, now they are got home, than they did in their journey. While they were on their journey, they underwent much labor and toil. It was a wilderness that they passed through; a difficult road. There were abundance of difficulties in the way; mountains and rough places. It was a laborious, fatiguing thing to travel the road. They were forced to lay out themselves to get along; and had many wearisome days and nights: but now they have got through; they have got to the place they sought; they are got home; got to their everlasting rest. They need to travel no more; nor labor any more; nor endure any more toil and difficulty; but enjoy perfect rest and peace; and will enjoy them forever. "And I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them," Rev. xiv. 13. They do not mourn that they are got home, but greatly rejoice. They look back upon the difficulties, and sorrows, and dangers of life, rejoicing that they have got through them all.

We are ready to look upon death as though it were a calamity to them; we are ready to mourn over them with tears of pity; to think that those that were so dear to us, should be in the dark, rotting grave; that they should there turn to corruption and worms; that they should be taken away from their dear children, and other pleasant enjoyments; and that they never should have any part more in any thing under the sun. Our bowels are ready to yearn over them, and we are ready to look upon it, as though some sorrowful thing had befallen them; and as though they were in awful circumstances. But this is owing to our infirmity that we are ready thus to look upon it. They are in a happy condition. They are inconceivably blessed. They do not mourn, but rejoice with exceeding joy. Their mouths are filled with joyful songs; they drink at rivers of pleasure. They find no mixture of grief at all, that they have changed their earthly houses and enjoyments, and their earthly friends, and the company of mortal mankind, for heaven. They think of it without any degree of regret.

This is an evil world in comparison to that they are now in. Their life here if attended with the best circumstances that any earthly life ever was, was attended with abundance that was adverse and afflictive; but now there is an end to all adversity. "They shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes," Rev. vii. 16, 17.

It is true we shall see them no more while here in this world, yet we ought not immoderately to mourn for that; though it used to be pleasant to us to see them; and though their company was sweet; for we should consider ourselves as but on a journey too; we should be travelling towards the same place that they are gone to; and why should we break our hearts with that, that they have

got there before us; when we are following after them as fast as we can; and hope, as soon as ever we get to our journey's end, to be with them again; to be with them in better circumstances, than ever we were with them while here? A degree of mourning for near relations when departed, is not inconsistent with Christianity, but very agreeable to it: for, as long as we are flesh and blood, no other can be expected, than that we shall have animal propensities and affections. But we have not just reason to be overborne and sunk in spirit, when the death of near friends is attended with these circumstances; we should be glad they are got to heaven, our mourning should be mingled with joy. "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them that are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others that have no hope," 1. Thess. iv. 13; i. e., that they should not sorrow as the heathen, that had no knowledge of a future happiness, nor any certain hope of any thing for themselves or their friends, after they were dead. This appears by the following verse: "For if we believe that Jesus died and arose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him."

2. *If it be so, that our lives ought to be only a journey towards heaven; how ill do they improve their lives, that spend them in travelling towards hell?*

Some men spend their whole lives, from their infancy to their dying day, in going down the broad way to destruction. They do not only draw nearer to hell in length of time, but they every day grow more ripe for destruction; they are more assimilated to the inhabitants of the infernal world. While others press forward in the strait and narrow way to life, and laboriously travel up the hill towards Zion, against the inclinations and tendency of the flesh; these run with a swift career down towards the valley of eternal death; towards the lake of fire; towards the bottomless pit. This is the employment of every day, with all wicked men; the whole day is spent in it. As soon as ever they awake in the morning, they set out anew towards hell, and spend every waking moment in it. They begin in early days before they begin to speak: "The wicked are estranged from the womb, they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies," Psalm xlviii. 4. They hold on in it with perseverance. Many of them that live to be old, are never weary in it; if they live to be a hundred years old, they will not give over travelling in the way to hell till they arrive there. And all the concerns of life are subordinated to this employment. A wicked man is a servant of sin; his powers and faculties are all employed in the service of sin, and in fitting for hell. And all his possessions are so used by him, as to be subservient to the same purpose. Some men spend their time in treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath. Thus do all unclean persons, that live in lascivious practices in secret. Thus do all malicious persons. Thus do all profane persons, that neglect duties of religion. Thus do all unjust persons; and those that are fraudulent and oppressive in their dealings. Thus do all backbiters and revilers. Thus do all covetous persons, that set their hearts chiefly on the riches of this world. Thus do tavern-haunters, and frequenters of evil company; and many other kinds of persons that might be mentioned. Thus do far the greater part of men; the bulk of mankind are hastening onward in the broad way to destruction. The way, as broad as it is, is, as it were, filled up with the multitude that are going with one accord this way. And they are every day going into hell out of this broad way by thousands Multitudes are continually flowing down into the great lake of fire and brimstone, out of this broad way, as some mighty river constantly disembogues its water into the ocean

3. *Hence when persons are converted, they do but begin their work, and set out in the way they have to go.*

They never till then do any thing at that work which their whole lives ought to be spent in; which we have now shown to be travelling towards heaven. Persons, before conversion, never take a step that way. Then does a man first set out on his journey, when he is brought home to Christ; and he is but just set out in it. So far is he from having done his work, that he then only begins to set his face towards heaven. His journey is not finished; he is then only first brought to be willing to go to it, and begins to look that way; so that his care and labor, in his Christian work and business, is then but begun, which he must spend the remaining part of his life in.

Those persons do ill, who, when they are converted, and have obtained a hope of their being in a good condition, do not strive as earnestly as they did before, while they were under awakenings. They ought, henceforward, as long as they live, to be as earnest and laborious as ever; as watchful and careful as ever; yea, they should increase more and more. It is no just objection or excuse from this, that now they have not the same to strive for as before; before they strove that they might be converted, but that they have obtained. Is there nothing else that persons have as much reason to strive, and lay out their strength for, as their own safety? Should we not be as willing to be diligent that we my serve and glorify God, as that we ourselves may be happy? And if we have obtained grace, yet there is not all obtained that may be. It is but a very little grace that we have obtained; we ought to strive that we may obtain more. We ought to strive as much that we may obtain the other degrees that are before, as we did to obtain that small degree that is behind. The apostle tells us, that he forgot what was behind, and reached forth towards what was before, Phil. iii. 13.

Yea, those that are converted, have now a further reason to strive for grace than they had before; for now they have tasted and seen something of the sweetness and excellency of it. A man that has once tasted the blessings of Canaan, has more reason to press forward towards it than he had before. And, then, they that are converted, should strive that they may make their calling and election sure. All those that are converted, are not sure of it; and those that are sure of it, do not know that they shall be always so; and still seeking and serving God with the utmost diligence, is the way to have assurance, and to have it maintained.

II. *Use may be of exhortation; so to spend the present life that it may only be a journey towards heaven.*

Labor to be sanctified, and to obtain such a disposition of mind, that you may be willing and desirous to change this world, and all the enjoyments of it for heaven. Labor to have your heart taken up so much about heaven and heavenly enjoyments, as that you may rejoice at any time when God calls you to leave your best earthly friends, and those things that are most comfortable to you here, to go to heaven, there to enjoy God and Christ.

Be persuaded to travel in the way that leads to heaven, viz., in a way of holiness, self-denial and mortification, in a way of obedience to all the commands of God, in a way of following Christ's example, in a way of heavenly life, or imitation of the saints and angels that live in heaven. Be content to travel on in this way, in a laborious manner, to endure all the fatigues of it. Begin to travel it without delay, if you have not already begun it; and travel in it with assiduity. Let it be your daily work from morning to night, and hold out in it to the end; let there be nothing that shall stop or discourage you, or turn you aside from this road Labor to be growing in holiness, to be coming nearer and nearer to heaven, in that you are more and more as you shall be when you get there, (if ever that be.) And let all other concerns be subordinated to this great concern of get-

ting forward toward heaven. Consider the reasons that have been mentioned why you should thus spend your life. Consider that the world is not your abiding place, and was never so intended by God. Consider how little a while you are to be here, and how little worth your while it is to spend your life to any other purpose. Consider that the future world is to be your everlasting abode; and that the enjoyments and concerns of this world, have their being only and entirely in order to another world. And consider further for motive,

1. *How worthy is heaven that your life should be wholly spent as a journey towards it.*

To what better purpose can you spend your life, whether you respect your duty or your interest? What better end can you propose to your journey than to obtain heaven? Here you are placed in this world, in this wilderness, and have your choice given you, that you may travel which way you please. And there is one way that leads to heaven. Now, can you direct your course better than this way? What can you choose better for your journey's end? All men have some aim or other in living. Some mainly seek worldly things; they spend their days in the pursuit of these things. But is not heaven, where is fulness of joy forever and ever, much more worthy to be sought by you? How can you better employ your strength and use your means, and spend your days, than in travelling the road that leads to the everlasting enjoyment of God; to his glorious presence; to the city of the New Jerusalem; to the heavenly mount Zion: where all your desires will be filled, and no danger of ever losing your happiness?

No man is at home in this world, whether he choose heaven or not; here he is but a transient person. Where can you choose your home better than in heaven? The rest and glory of heaven is so great, that it is worthy we should desire it above riches; above our fathers' houses, or our own; above husband or wife, or children, or all earthly friends. It is worthy that we should subordinate these things to it, and that we should be ready, cheerfully, to part with them for heaven, whenever God calls.

2. *This is the way to have death comfortable to us.*

If we spend our lives so as to be only a journeying towards heaven, this will be the way to have death, that is the end of the journey, and entrance into heaven, not terrible but comfortable.

This is the way to be free from bondage, through the fear of death, and to have the prospect and forethought of death comfortable. Does the traveller think of his journey's end with fear and terror, especially when he has been many days travelling, and it be a long and tiresome journey? Is it terrible to him to think that he has almost got to his journey's end? Are not men rather wont to rejoice at it? Were the children of Israel sorry, after forty years travel in the wilderness, when they had almost got to Canaan? This is the way to have death not terrible when it comes. It is the way to be able to part with the world without grief. Does it grieve the traveller when he has got home, to quit his staff and load of provision that he had to sustain him by the way?

3. *No more of your life will be pleasant to think of when you come to die, than has been spent after this manner.*

All of your past life that has been spent as a journey towards heaven, will be comfortable to think of on a death-bed, and no more. If you have spent none of your life this way, your whole life will be terrible to you to think of, unless you die under some great delusion. You will see then, how that all of your life that has been spent otherwise is lost. You will then see the vanity of other aims, that you may have proposed to yourself. The thought of what you

here possessed and enjoyed in the world, will not be pleasant to you, unless you can think withal, that you have subordinated them to this purpose.

4. *Consider that those that are willing thus to spend their lives as a journey towards heaven, may have heaven.*

Heaven, as high as it is, and glorious as it is, is attainable for such poor worthless creatures as we are. We, even such worms, may attain to have for our home, that glorious region that is the habitation of the glorious angels; yea, the dwelling-place of the glorious Son of God; and where is the glorious presence of the great Jehovah. And we may have it freely; there is no high price that is demanded of us for this privilege. We may have it without money and without price; if we are but willing to set out and go on towards it; are but willing to travel the road that leads to it, and bend our course that way as long as we live; we may and shall have heaven for our eternal resting place.

5. *Let it be considered, that if our lives be not a journey towards heaven, they will be a journey to hell.*

We cannot continue here always, but we must go somewhere else. All mankind after they have been in this world a little while, go out of it, and there are but two places that they go to; the two great receptacles of all that depart out of this world; the one is heaven; whither a few, a small number in comparison, travel; the way that leads hither, is but thinly occupied with travellers. And the other is hell, whither the bulk of mankind do throng. And one or the other of these must be our journey's end; the issue of our course in this world.

I shall conclude by giving some directions.

1. Labor to get a sense of the vanity of this world, or the vanity of it on account of the little satisfaction that is to be enjoyed here; and on account of its short continuance, and unserviceableness when we most stand in need of help, viz., on a death-bed.

All men, that live any considerable time in the world, see abundance that might convince them of the vanity of the world, if they would but consider.

Be persuaded to exercise consideration, when you see and hear, from time to time, of the death of others. Labor to turn your thoughts this way. See if you can see the vanity of this world in such a glass. If you were sensible how vain a thing this world is, you would see that it is not worthy that your life should be spent to the purposes thereof; and all is lost that is not some way aimed at heaven.

2. *Labor to be much acquainted with heaven.*

If you are not acquainted with it, you will not be likely to spend your life as a journey thither. You will not be sensible of the worth of it; nor will you long for it. Unless you are much conversant in your mind with a better good, it will be exceeding difficult to you to have your hearts loose from these things, and to use them only in subordination to something else, and to be ready to part with them for the sake of that better good.

Labor therefore to obtain a realizing sense of a heavenly world, to get a firm belief of the reality of it, and to be very much conversant with it in your thoughts.

3. *Seek heaven only by Jesus Christ.*

Christ tells us that he is the way, and the truth, and the life, John xiv. 6. He tells us that he is the door of the sheep: "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved; and go in and out, and find pasture," John x. 9. If we, therefore, would improve our lives as a journey towards heaven, we must seek it by him, and not by our own righteousness; as expecting to obtain only for his sake, looking to him, having our dependence on him only for the pur-

chase of heaven, and procuring it for us by his merit. And expect strength to walk in a way of holiness, the way that leads to heaven, only from him.

4. *Let Christians help one another in going this journey.*

There are many ways that Christians might greatly help and forward one another in their way to heaven, by religious conference, and otherwise. And persons greatly need help in this way, which is, as I have observed, a difficult way.

Let Christians be exhorted to go this journey, as it were in company, conversing together while their journey shall end, and assisting one another Company is very desirable in a journey, but in none so much as in this.

Let Christians go united, and not fall out by the way, which would be the way to hinder one another; but use all means they can to help one another up the hill.

This is the way to be more successful in travelling, and to have the more joyful meeting at their Father's house in glory.

SERMON XXXVII.

JOSEPH'S GREAT TEMPTATION AND GRACIOUS DELIVERANCE.

GENESIS xxxix. 12.—And he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out.

WE have an account here, and in the context, of that remarkable behavior of Joseph in the house of Potiphar, that was the occasion both of his great affliction, and also afterwards of his high advancement and great prosperity in the land of Egypt. The behavior that I speak of, is that which was on occasion of the temptation that his mistress laid before him to commit uncleanness with her.

We read in the beginning of the chapter how Joseph, after he had been so cruelly treated by his brethren, and sold into Egypt for a slave, was advanced in the house of Potiphar, who had bought him. Joseph was one that feared God, and therefore God was with him; and wonderfully ordered things for him, and so influenced the heart of Potiphar his master, that instead of keeping him as a mere slave, to which purpose he was sold, he made him his steward and overseer over his house, and all that he had was put into his hands; insomuch that we are told, verse 6, "that he left all that he had in his hand; and that he knew not aught that he had, save the bread which he did eat." While Joseph was in these prosperous circumstances, he met with a great temptation in his master's house; so we are told that he, being a goodly person, and well favored, his mistress cast her eyes upon and lusted after him, and used all her art to tempt him to commit uncleanness with her.

Concerning this temptation, and his behavior under it, many things are worthy to be noted.

We may observe, how great the temptation was that he was under. It is to be considered, Joseph was now in his youth, a season of life when persons are most liable to be overcome by temptations of this nature. And he was in a state of unexpected prosperity in Potiphar's house, which has a tendency to lift persons up, especially young ones, whereby commonly they more easily fall before temptations.

And then the superiority of the person that laid the temptation before him rendered it much the greater. She was his mistress, and he a servant under her. And the manner of her tempting him. She did not only carry herself so to Joseph, as to give him cause to suspect that he might be admitted to such criminal converse with her, that yet might be accompanied with some apprehension, that possibly he might be mistaken, and so deter him from adventuring on such a proposal; but she directly proposed it to him; plainly manifesting her disposition to it. So that here was no such thing as a suspicion of her unwillingness to deter him, but a manifestation of her desire to entice him to it. Yea, she appeared greatly engaged in the matter. And there was not only her desire manifested to entice him, but her authority over him to enforce the temptation. She was his mistress, and he might well imagine, that if he utterly refused a compliance, he should incur her displeasure; and she, being his master's wife, had power to do much to his disadvantage, and to render his circumstances more uncomfortable in the family.

And the temptation was the greater, in that she did not only tempt him once, but frequently, *day by day*, verse 10. And at last became more violent

with him. She caught him by his garment, saying, *lie with me:* as in the verse of the text.

His behavior was very remarkable under these temptations. He absolutely refused any compliance with them: he made no reply that manifested as though the temptation had gained at all upon him; so much as to hesitate about it, or at all to deliberate upon it. He complied in no degree, either to the gross act she proposed, or any thing tending towards it, or that should in a lesser degree be gratifying to her wicked inclination. And he persisted, resolute and unshaken under her continual solicitations: verse 10, "And it came to pass as she spake to Joseph, day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her." He, to his utmost, avoided so much as being where she was. And the motives and principles from which he acted, manifested by his reply to her solicitations, are remarkable.

He first sets before her how injuriously he should act against his master, if he should comply with her proposal: "Behold my master—hath committed all that he hath to my hand; there is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife." But he then proceeded to inform her of that which, above all things, deterred him from a compliance, viz., that it would be great wickedness, and sin against God: "How shall I do this, and sin against God!" He would not do any such thing, as he would not injure his master; but that which influenced more than all on this occasion, was the fear of sinning against God. On this account he persisted in his resolution to the last.

In the text we have an account of his behavior under the last and greatest temptation that he had from her. This temptation was great, as we are told it was at a time when there was nobody in the house but he and his mistress, verse 11; there was an opportunity to commit the fact with the greatest secrecy. And at this time it seems that she was more violent than ever before: "she caught him by the garment," &c. She laid hold on him as though she was resolute to attain her purpose of him.

Under these circumstances he not only refused her, but fled from her, as he would have done from one that was going to assassinate, or murder him; he escaped as for his life. He not only would not be guilty of such a fact, but neither would he by any means be in the house with her, where he should be in the way of her temptation.

This behavior of Joseph is doubtless recorded for the instruction of all: therefore, from the words I shall observe this

DOCTRINE.

It is our duty, not only to avoid those things that are themselves sinful, but also, as far as may be, those things that lead and expose to sin.

Thus did Joseph: he not only refused actually to commit uncleanness with his mistress, who enticed him, but refused to be there, where he should be in the way of temptation, verse 10. He refused to lie by her, or be with her: and in the text we are told, *he fled, and got him out;* would by no means be in her company. Though it was no sin in itself for Joseph to be in the house where his mistress was, but under these circumstances it would expose him to sin. Joseph was sensible he had naturally a corrupt heart, that tended to betray him to sin; and therefore he would by no means be in the way of temptation; but with haste he fled, he ran from the dangerous place. Inasmuch as he was exposed to sin in that house where he was, he fled out of it with as

much haste as if the house had been all a light of fire, or full of enemies, who stood ready with drawn swords to stab him to the very heart. When she took him by the garment, he left his garment in her hands: he had rather lose his garment than stay a moment there, where he was in such danger of losing his chastity.

I say in the *doctrine*, that persons should avoid things that expose to sin, as far as may be, because the case may be so, that persons may be called to expose themselves to temptation; and when it is so, they may hope for divine strength and protection under temptations.

The case may be so that it may be a man's indispensable duty to undertake an office, or piece of work, that is attended with a great deal of temptation. Thus, although ordinarily a man ought not to run into that temptation, of being exposed to persecution for the true religion, lest the temptation should be too hard for him; but should avoid it as much as may be (therefore, Christ thus directs his disciples, Matt. x. 23, "When ye be persecuted in one city flee to another"); yet the case may be so, that a man may be called not to flee from persecution, but to run the venture of such a trial, trusting in God to uphold him under it. Ministers and magistrates may be obliged to continue with their people in such circumstances; as Nehemiah says, Neh. vi. 11, "Should such a man as I flee?" So the apostles.

Yea they may be called to go into the midst of it, to those places where they cannot reasonably expect but to meet with such temptations. So sometimes the apostles did. Paul went up to Jerusalem, when he knew beforehand, that there, *bonds and afflictions awaited him*, Acts xx. 23.

So in some other cases, the necessity of affairs may call upon men to engage in some business that is peculiarly attended with temptations. But when it is so, men are indeed in this way, least exposed to sin; for they are always safest in the way of duty. Prov. x. 9, "He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely." And though there be many things by which they may have extraordinary temptations, in the affairs they have undertaken, yet if they have a clear call to it, it is no presumption to hope for divine support and preservation in it.

But for persons needlessly to expose themselves to temptation, and to do those things that tend to sin, is unwarrantable and contrary to that excellent example we have set before us in the text. And that we ought to avoid not only those things that are in themselves sinful, but also those things that lead and expose to sin, is manifested by the following arguments:

I. It is a thing very evident and manifest, that we ought to use our utmost endeavors to avoid sin, which is inconsistent with needlessly doing those things that expose and lead to sin. That we ought to do our utmost to avoid sin is manifest, that being the greatest evil; and the greater any evil is, the greater care, and the more earnest endeavors does it require to avoid it. This is plain, and what we by our practice show, that we are all sensible of the truth of. Those things that appear to us very great and dreadful evils, do we use proportionably great care to avoid And therefore the greatest evil of all requires the greatest and utmost care to avoid it.

Sin is an infinite evil, because committed against an infinitely great and excellent Being, and so a violation of infinite obligation; therefore, however great our care be to avoid sin, it cannot be more than proportionable to the evil we would avoid. Our care and endeavor cannot be infinite, as the evil of sin is infinite; but yet it ought to be to the utmost of our power; we ought to use every method that tends to the avoiding of sin. This is manifest to reason.

And not only so, but this is positively required of us in the word of God,

Josh. xxii. 5, "Take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, which Moses, the servant of the Lord, charged you, to love the Lord your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your soul." Deut. iv. 15, 16, "Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves, lest ye corrupt yourselves." Chap. xii 30, "Take heed to thyself, that thou be not snared," &c. Luke xi. 36, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness. 1 Cor. x. 12, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." Deut. iv. 9, "Take heed to thyself, keep thy soul diligently." These and many other texts of Scripture, plainly require of us the utmost possible diligence and caution to avoid sin.

But how can he be said to use the utmost possible diligence and caution to avoid sin, that voluntarily does those things, that naturally expose and lead to sin? How can he be said with the utmost possible caution to avoid an enemy, that voluntarily lays himself in his way? How can he be said to use the utmost possible caution to preserve the life of his child, that suffers it to go on the edge of precipices or pits; or to play on the borders of a deep gulf; or to wander in a wood, that is haunted by beasts of prey?

II. *It is evident that we ought to avoid those things that expose and lead to sin; because a due sense of the evil of sin, and a just hatred of it, will necessarily have this effect upon us, so to do.*

If we were duly sensible of the evil and dreadful nature of sin, we should have an exceeding dread of it upon our spirits. We should hate it worse than death, and should fear it worse than the devil himself; and dread it even as we dread damnation. But those things that men have an exceeding dread of upon their spirits, they naturally and necessarily keep at a great distance from; and avoid those things that they apprehend expose to them. As a child that has been greatly terrified by the sight of any wild beast, will by no means be persuaded to go anywhere, where it apprehends that it shall be exposed to it, or fall in its way.

Sin in its own nature is infinitely hateful, so in its natural tendency it is infinitely dreadful. It is the tendency of all sin eternally to undo the soul. Every sin naturally carries hell in it! Therefore all sin ought to be treated by us as we would treat a thing that is infinitely terrible. If it be not so, that any one sin, yea, the least sin, do not necessarily bring eternal ruin with it, it is owing to nothing but the free grace and mercy of God to us, and not to the nature and tendency of sin itself. But certainly we ought not to take the less care to avoid sin, or all that tends to it, for the freeness and greatness of God's mercy to us, through which there is hope of pardon; for that would be a most ungrateful and vile abuse of mercy indeed. If it were so, that it were made known to us, that if we ever voluntarily committed any particular act of sin, we should be damned without any remedy or escape, should we not exceedingly dread the commission of such sins? Should we not be very watchful and careful to stand at the greatest distance from that sin, and from every thing that might expose us to it, and that has any tendency to stir up our lusts, or to betray us to such an act of sin? Let us then consider, that if it be not so, that the next voluntary act of known sin shall necessarily and unavoidably issue in certain damnation, yet it will certainly deserve it: we shall thereby really deserve to be cast off, without any remedy or hope; and it can only be owing to free grace, that it will not certainly and remedilessly be followed with such a punishment. And shall we be guilty of such a vile abuse of God's mercy to us, as to take encouragement from it, the more boldly to expose ourselves to sin?

III. *It is evident that we ought not only to avoid sin, but things that expose and lead to sin; because this is the way we act in things that pertain to our temporal interest.*

Men do not only avoid those things that are themselves the hurt and ruin of their temporal interest, but also the things that tend to expose to it; because they love their temporal lives, they will not only actually avoid killing themselves, but they are very careful to avoid those things that bring their lives into danger, though they do not certainly know but they may escape.

They are careful not to pass rivers and deep waters on rotten ice, though they do not certainly know that they shall fall through and drown; so they will not only avoid those things that would be in themselves the ruin of their estates, such as the setting their own houses on fire, and burning them up with their substance; their taking their money and throwing it into the sea, &c., but they carefully avoid those things by which their estates are exposed. They are watchful, and have their eyes about them; are careful whom they deal with; they are watchful, that they be not overreached in their bargains; that they do not lay themselves open to knaves and fraudulent persons.

If a man be sick of a dangerous distemper, he is careful to avoid every thing that tends to increase the disorder; not only what he knows to be mortal in his situation, but other things that he fears the consequence of, or that may be prejudicial to him. Men are in this way wont to take care of their temporal interest, as what they have a great regard for. And therefore if we are not as careful to avoid sin, as we are to avoid injury in our temporal interest, it will show a regardless disposition with respect to sin and duty; or that we do not much care though we do sin against God.

God's glory is surely a thing of as much importance and concern as our temporal interest. Certainly we should be as careful not to be exposed to sin against the Majesty of heaven and earth, as men are wont to be of a few pounds; yea, the latter are but mere trifles, compared with the former.

IV. *We are wont to do thus by our dear earthly friends.*

We not only are careful of those things wherein the destruction of their lives, or their hurt and calamity in any respect do directly consist, but are careful to avoid those things that do but remotely tend to it. We are careful to prevent and cut off all occasions of their loss or damage in any respect; and are watchful against that which tends in any wise to deprive them of their comfort or good name; and the reason is because they are very dear to us. In this manner men are wont to be careful of the good of their own children, and dread the approaches of any mischief that they apprehend they are, or may be exposed to. And we should take it hard if our friends did not do thus by us.

And surely we ought to treat God as a dear friend; we ought to act towards him, as those that have a sincere love and unfeigned regard to him; and so ought to watch and be careful against all occasions of that which is contrary to his honor and glory. If we have not a temper and desire so to do, it will show that whatever our pretences are, we are not God's sincere friends, and have no true love to him.

If we should be offended at any that have professed friendship to us, if they treated us in this manner, and were no more careful of our interest, surely God may justly be offended, that we are no more careful of his glory.

V. *We would have God in his providence towards us, not order those things that tend to our hurt, or expose our interest; therefore certainly we ought to avoid things that tend to sin against him.*

We desire and love to have God's providence such toward us, as that our

welfare may be well-secured. No man loves to live in exposed, uncertain, and dangerous circumstances. While he is so, he lives uncomfortably, in that he lives in continual fear. We desire that God would so order things concerning us, that we may be safe from fear of evil; and that no evil may come nigh our dwelling; and that because we dread calamity. So we do not love the appearance and approaches of it; and love to have it a great distance from us. We desire to have God be to us as a wall of fire round about us, to defend us; and that he would surround us as the mountains do the valleys, to guard us from every danger or enemy, that so no evil may come nigh us.

Now this plainly shows, that we ought in our behavior towards God to keep at a great distance from sin, and from all that exposes to it; as we desire God in his providence to us, should keep calamity and misery at a great distance from us, and not order those things that expose our welfare.

VI. *Seeing we are to pray we may not be led into temptation; certainly we ought not to run ourselves into it.*

This is one request that Christ directs us to make to God in that form of prayer which he taught his disciples, "Lead us not into temptation." And how inconsistent shall we be with ourselves, if we pray to God, not to order it so in his providence, that we should be led into temptations; and yet at the same time we are not careful to avoid temptation; but bring ourselves into it, by doing those things that lead and expose to sin. What self-contradiction is there in it, for a man to pray to God that he may be kept from that, which he takes no care to avoid? By praying that we may be kept from temptation we profess to God, that being in temptation is a thing that is to be avoided; but by running into it, show that we choose the contrary, viz., not to avoid it.

VII. *The apostle directs us to avoid those things that are in themselves lawful, but tend to lead others into sin; surely then we should avoid what tends to lead ourselves into sin.*

The apostle directs to this, 1 Cor. viii. 9: "Take heed lest this liberty of yours become a stumbling-block, to them that are weak." Rom. xiv. 13, "That no man put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall in his brother's way." Verse 15, "But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat." Verses 20, 21, "For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence. It is good neither to eat flesh nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak."

Now if this rule of the apostle be agreeable to the word of Christ, as we must suppose, or expunge what he says out of the canon of the Scripture; then a like rule obliges more strongly in those things that tend to lead ourselves into sin.

VIII. *There are many precepts of Scripture that do directly and positively imply, that we ought to avoid those things that tend to sin.*

This very thing is commanded by Christ, Matt. xxvi. 41, where he directs us to watch lest we enter into temptation. But certainly running ourselves into temptation, is the reverse of watching against it.

Again, we are commanded to abstain from all appearance of evil; i. e., do by sin, as a man does by a thing he hates the sight or appearance of; and therefore will avoid any thing that savors of it, or looks like it; and will not come near it, or in sight of it.

Again, Christ commanded to separate from us, those things that are stumbling-blocks, or occasions of sin, however dear they are to us. Matt. v. 29, "If

thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee." Verse 30, "And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off." By the right hand offending us, is not meant its paining us, but the word in the original signifies, being a stumbling-block; if thy right hand prove a stumbling-black, or occasion to fall; i. e., an occasion to sin. Those things are called offences or stumbling-blocks in the New Testament, that are the occasions of falling into sin. We ought to avoid running up against stumbling-blocks; i. e., we should avoid those things that expose us to fall into sin.

Yea, Christ tells us, we must avoid them however dear they are to us, though as dear as our right hand or right eye. If there be any practice that we have been accustomed to, that naturally tends and exposes us to sin, we must have done with it; though we love it ever so well, and are ever so loth to part with it, though it be as contrary to our inclination, as to cut off our right hand, or pluck out our own right eye, and that upon pain of damnation, for it is intimated, that if we do not, we must go with two hands and two eyes into hell-fire.

And again: God took great care to forbid the children of Israel those things that tended to lead them into sin. For this reason, he forbid them marrying strange wives: Deut. vii. 3, 4, "Neither shalt thou make marriages with them—for they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods." For this reason they were commanded to destroy all those things, that the nations of Canaan had used in their idolatry; and if any were enticed over to idolatry, they were to be destroyed without mercy, though ever so near and dear friends. They were not only to be parted with but stoned with stones; yea, they themselves were to fall upon them, and put them to death, though son or daughter, or their bosom friend: Deut. xiii. 6, &c., "If thy brother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, thou shalt not consent unto him, neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him. But thou shalt surely kill him. Thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death."

Again, the wise man warns us to avoid those things that tend and expose us to sin; especially the sin of uncleanness. Prov. vi. 27, "Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burnt? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burnt? So, whosoever toucheth her, shall not be innocent." This is the truth held forth; avoid those customs and practices that naturally tend to stir up lust. And there are many examples in Scripture, which have the force of precept; and recorded, as not only worthy of, but demand our imitation. The conduct of Joseph in the text is one; and that recorded of King David is another. Psal. xxxix. 1, 2, "I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me. I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, even from good." Even from good—that is, he was so watchful over his words, and kept at such a great distance from speaking what might in any way tend to sin, that he avoided, in certain circumstances, speaking what was in itself lawful, lest he should be betrayed into that which was sinful.

IX. *A prudent sense of our own weakness, and exposedness to yield to temptation, obliges us to avoid that which leads or exposes to sin.*

Whoever knows himself and is sensible how weak he is; and his constant exposedness to run into sin; how full of corruption his heart is, which, like fuel, is exposed to catch fire, and bring destruction upon him; how much he has in him to incline him to sin; and how unable he is to stand of himself; who is sensible of this, and has any regard of his duty, but will be very watchful against

every thing that may lead and expose to sin; on this account Christ directed us, Matt. xxvi. 41, "To watch and pray lest we enter into temptation." The reason there is added, the flesh is weak! He that in confidence of his own strength, boldly runs the venture of sinning by going into temptation, manifests great presumption, and a sottish insensibility of his own weakness. "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool," Prov. xxviii. 26.

The wisest and strongest, and some of the most holy men in the world, have been overthrown by such means. So was David; so was Solomon. His wives turned away his heart. If such persons, so eminent for holiness, were this way led into sin, surely it should be a warning to us. Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

I now proceed to the application.

In one use of exhortation. To exhort all to a compliance with their duty in this respect, not only to avoid sin, but those things that lead and expose to sin.

If it be made out clearly and evidently from reason and the word of God, to be our duty so to do, this would be enough with all Christians. Will a follower of Christ stand objecting and disputing against a thing, that is irrefragably proved and demonstrated to be his duty?

But here some may be ready to inquire, How shall we know what things do lead and expose to sin? Let a man do what he will, he cannot avoid sinning, as long as he has such a corrupt heart within him. And there is nothing a man can do, or turn his hand to, but that he may find some temptation in it. And though it be true, as it is said in the doctrine, that a man ought, as far as may be, to avoid those things that lead and expose to sin; and it is evident by the arguments that have been brought, that those things that have special tendency to expose men to sin, are what we ought to shun, as much as in us lies: yet how shall we judge and determine what things they are, that have a natural tendency to sin; or do especially lead to it?

I would answer in some particulars, which are plain and easy, and which cannot be denied without the greatest absurdity.

Answer 1. *That which is bordering on those sins that the lusts of men's hearts strongly incline them to, is of this sort.* Men come into the world, with many strong and violent lusts in their hearts, and are exceeding prone of themselves to transgress, even in the safest circumstances they can be placed in. And surely so much the nearer they are to that sin, which they are naturally strongly inclined to, so much the more are they exposed. If any of us that are parents, should see our children near the brink of some deep pit, or close by the edge of the precipice of a high mountain, and not only so, but the ground upon which the child stood slippery, and steeply descending directly towards the precipice, should we not reckon a child exposed in such a case? Should we not be in haste to remove the child from its very dangerous situation?

It was the manner among the Israelites, to build their houses with flat roofs, so that persons might walk on the tops of their houses. And therefore God took care to make it a law among them, that every man should have battlements upon the edges of their roofs; lest any person should fall off and be killed. Deut. xxii. 8, "When thou buildest a new house then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence." And certainly we ought to take the like care that we do not fall into sin; which carries in it eternal death. We should, as it were, fix a battlement, a guard to keep us from the edge of the precipice. Much more ought we to take care, that we do not go upon a roof that is not only without battlements, but when it is steep, and we shall naturally incline to fall.

Men's lusts are like strong enemies, endeavoring to draw them into sin If a man stood upon a dangerous precipice, and had enemies about him, pulling and drawing him, endeavoring to throw him down; would he in such a case, choose, or dare to stand near the edge? Would he look upon himself safe close on the brink? Would he not endeavor, for his own safety, to keep at a distance?

2. *Those things that tend to feed lusts in the imagination, are of this kind* They lead and expose him to sin. Those things that have a natural tendency to excite in the mind, the idea or imagination of that which is the object of the lust, certainly tend to feed and promote that lust. What can be more plain and evident, than that a presenting the object, tends to stir up the appetite? Reason and experience teach this.

Therefore all things, whether they be words or actions, have a tendency and expose to sin, that tend to raise and uphold in the mind, imaginations or ideas, of those things which the lust tends to. It is certainly wrong and unlawful to feed a lust even in the imagination. It is quite contrary to the holy rules of God's word: Prov. xxiv. 9, "The thought of foolishness is sin." Matt. v. 28, "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery." A man, by gratifying his lust in his imagination and thoughts, may make his soul, in the sight of God, to be a hold of foul spirits; and like a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. And sinful imaginations tend to sinful actions, and outward behavior in the end. Lust is always first conceived in the imagination, and then brought forth in the outward practice. You may see the progress of it in James i. 15: "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin."

Therefore for a man to do those things that tend to excite the objects of his lusts in his imagination, he does that which has as natural a tendency to sin, as a conception has to a birth. And such things are therefore abominable in the sight of a pure and holy God. We are commanded to keep at a great distance from spiritual pollution; and to hate even the very "garment spotted with the flesh," Jude 23.

3. *Those things that the experience and observation of mankind show to be ordinarily attended or followed with sin, are of this sort.*

Experience is a good rule to determine by in things of this nature. How is it we know the natural tendency of any thing, but only by observation and experience? Men observe and find, time after time, that such things are commonly attended and followed with such other things. And hence mankind pronounce of them, that they have a natural tendency to them. We have no other way to know the tendency of any thing. Thus men by observation and experience, know that the warmth of the sun, and showers of rain, are attended with the growth of plants of the earth; and hence they learn, that they have a tendency to it. So they find by experience, that the bite of some kind of serpents is commonly followed with illness, and often with death. Hence they learn, that the bite of such serpents has a natural tendency to bring disorder upon the body, and exposes to death.

And so, if experience and common observation shows, that any particular practice or custom is commonly attended with that which is very sinful, we may safely conclude, that such a practice tends to sin; that it leads and exposes to it.

Thus we may determine, that tavern-haunting and gaming are things that tend to sin; because common experience and observation show, that those practices are attended with a great deal of sin and wickedness. The observation of all ages and all nations, with one voice declares it. It shows, where taverns are

much frequented, for drinking and the like, they are especially places of sin, of profaneness, and other wickedness: and it shows, that those towns, where there is much of this, are places where no good generally prevails. And it also shows that those persons that are given much to frequenting taverns, are most commonly vicious persons. And so of gaming; as playing at cards, experience shows, that those persons that practise this, do generally fall into much sin. Hence these practices are become infamous among all sober, virtuous persons.

4. *Another way by which persons may determine of some things, that they lead and expose to sin, is by their own experience, or what they have found in themselves.*

If persons have found in themselves, from time to time, that they have actually led them into sin, this surely is enough to convince them, that such things do actually lead and expose to sin; for what will convince men, if their own experience will not? Thus if men have found, by undeniable experience, that any practice or custom stirs up lust in them, and has betrayed them into foolish and sinful behavior, or sinful thoughts; they may determine that they lead and expose to sin. Or if they, upon examining themselves, must own that such a custom or practice has, time after time, had that effect upon them, as to dispose them to sins of omission of known duty, such as secret prayer, and make them more backward to it; and also to indispose them to reading and religious meditation; and they, after they have been doing such or such a thing, have found this has commonly been the effect of it, that they have been more apt to cast off prayer, or has had a tendency to the neglect of family prayer. Or if it seems to lead to unwatchfulness; they find, since they have complied with such a custom, they are less watchful of their hearts, less disposed to any thing that is serious; that the frame of their mind is more light, and their hearts less on the things of another world, and more after vanity; these are sinful effects; and therefore if experience shows a custom or practice to be attended with these things, then experience shows that they lead and expose to sin.

5. *We may determine whether a thing be of an evil tendency, or not, by the effect that an outpouring of the Spirit of God, and a general flourishing of religion, has with respect to it.*

If a pouring out of the Spirit of God on a people, puts a stop to any practice or custom, and roots it out, surely it argues, that that practice or custom is of no good tendency; for if there be no hurt in it, and it tends to no hurt, why should the Spirit of God destroy it? The Spirit of God has no tendency to destroy any thing that is neither sinful, nor has any tendency to sin. Why should it? Why should we suppose that the Spirit of God should be an enemy to that which has no hurt in it, nor has any tendency to that which is hurtful?

The flourishing of religion has no tendency to abolish or expel any thing that is in no way against religion. That which is not against religion, religion will not appear against. Religion has no tendency to destroy any custom or practice, that has no tendency to destroy that. It is a rule that holds in all contraries and opposites: the opposition is equal on both sides. So contrary as light is to darkness, so contrary is darkness to light. It is equal both ways. So, just so contrary as the flourishing of religion is to any custom, just so contrary is that custom to the flourishing of religion. That custom that religion tends to destroy, that custom, if it prevail, tends also to destroy religion. Therefore, if the flourishing of religion, and the outpouring of the Spirit of God, tends to overthrow any custom that takes place or prevails, we may surely determine, that that custom is either in itself sinful, or tends and exposes to evil.

6. *We may determine, by the effect that a general decay of religion has with respect to them, whether they be things of a sinful tendency or not.*

If they be things that come with a decay of religion, that creep in as that decays, we may determine they are things of no good tendency. The withdrawing of good, does not let in good, but evil. It is evil, not good, comes in, as good gradually ceases. What is it but darkness that comes in as light withdraws?

Therefore if there be any decay of religion in the town, or in particular persons, and upon this any certain customs or practices take place and are allowed, which were wholly abstained from and renounced when religion was in a more flourishing state, we may safely conclude that such customs and practices are contrary to the nature of true religion; and therefore in themselves sinful, or tending to sin.

7. *We may in many things determine, whether any custom be of a good tendency, by considering what the effect would be, if it was openly and universally owned and practised.*

There are many things that some persons practise somewhat secretly, and are partly hidden in; and that they plead to be not hurtful; which, if they had suitable consideration to discern what the consequence would be, if every body openly practised the same, it would soon show that the consequence would be confusion, and a most woful state of things. If, therefore, there be any custom, that is of such a nature, that it will not bear universal open practice and profession; but if it should come to *that*, the least consideration will show that the consequence would be lamentable; we may determine that *that* custom is of an ill tendency. For if there is no hurt in it, and it is neither sinful in itself, nor tends to any thing sinful, then it is no matter how open and universal the world is in it; for we need not be afraid of that custom's being too prevalent and universal, that has no ill tendency in it.

Thus I have mentioned some general rules, by which to determine and judge what things are of a bad and sinful tendency. And these things are so plain, that for a person to deny them, would be absurd and ridiculous.

I would now, in the name of God, warn all persons to avoid such things, as appear by these rules to lead and expose to sin. And particularly, I would now take occasion to warn our young people, as they would approve themselves fearers of God, to avoid all such things in company, that, being tried by these rules, will appear to have a tendency or lead to sin. Avoid all such ways of talking and acting as have a tendency to this; and follow the example of Joseph in this.

Not only the most gross acts of uncleanness, but all degrees of lasciviousness, both in talking and acting, are strictly forbidden in Scripture, as what should not be so much as once named among saints or Christians: "Gal. v. 9, "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness." Eph. v. 3, 4, 5, "But fornication, and all uncleanness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints. Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ, and of God." We should hate even the garments spotted with the flesh, i. e., should hate and shun all that in the least approaches to any such thing or savors of it.

And I desire that certain customs that are common among young people in the country, and have been so a long time, may be examined by those rules that have been mentioned. That custom in particular, of young people of different sexes lying in bed together! However light is made of it, and however ready

persons may be to laugh at its being condemned; if it be examined by the rules that have been mentioned, it will appear past all contradiction, to be one of those things that lead and expose to sin. And I believe what experience and fact will show of the consequence and event of it, does abundantly bear witness to it. And whoever wisely considers the matter, must say, that this custom of this country (to which it seems to be peculiar, among people that pretend to uphold their credit) has been one main thing that has led to that growth of uncleanness that has been in the land. And so there are other customs and liberties that are customarily used among young people in company, that they that use them know that they lead to sin. They know that they tend to stir up their lusts; that it does do it; and this is the very end for which they do it, to gratify their lusts in some measure. Little do such persons consider, what a holy God they are soon to be judged by, that now make a mock of sin, who abominates the impurities of their hearts.

If, therefore, they do actually stir up and feed lust, then certainly they tend to further degrees and more gross acts. That which stirs up lust, makes it more violent, and does therefore certainly the more expose persons to be overcome by it. How evident and undeniable are these things; and how strange that any should cavil against them, or make a derision of them!

Possibly you may be confident of your own strength, and may think with yourself, that you are not in danger, that there is no temptation in these things, but what you are able easily to overcome. But you should consider, that the most self-confident are most in danger. Peter was very confident, that he should not deny Christ, but how dreadfully otherwise was the event! If when others that have fallen into gross sins, should be inquired of, and should declare how it was with them; doubtless they would say, that they at first thought there was no danger; they were far from the thought that ever they should commit such wickedness; but yet by venturing further and further, they fell at last into the foulest and grossest transgressions. And persons may long withstand temptation, and be suddenly overcome at last. None so much in danger, as the most bold. They are most safe, that are most sensible of their own weakness; and most distrustful of their own hearts, and most sensible of their continual need of restraining grace. Young persons with respect to the sin of uncleanness, are dealt with by the devil, just as some give an account of some sort of serpents charming of birds and other animals down into their mouths. If the serpent takes them with his eyes, though they seem to be affrighted by it, yet they will not flee away, but will keep the serpent in sight, and approach nearer and nearer to him, till they fall a prey.

Another custom that I desire may be examined by the forementioned rules, is that of young people of both sexes getting together in the night, in those companies for mirth and jollity, that they call frolics; so spending the time together till late in the night, in their jollity. I desire our young people to suffer their ears to be open to what I have to say upon this point; as I am the messenger of the Lord of Hosts to them, and not determine that they will not hearken, before they have heard what I shall say. I hope there are but few persons among us so abandoned, as to determine that they will go on in a practice, whether they are convinced that it is unlawful or not; or though it should be proved to them to be unlawful by undeniable arguments.

Therefore let us examine this custom and practice by what has been said. It has been proved undeniably, that we ought not to go on in a practice that leads and exposes to sin; and rules have been laid down to judge what does thus expose and lead to it, that I think are plain and undeniable

Therefore, now let us try this custom by these rules, and see whether it will bear the test or not. Certainly a Christian will not be unwilling to have his practices examined and tried by the rules of reason and God's word; but will rather rejoice in it.

And I desire particularly, that the practice may be tried by that sure touch-stone of experience. Let it be tried by the consideration of what is experienced in fact abroad in one town, and place, and another. This is one of the rules of trial that have been mentioned, that that custom that the experience and observation of mankind shows to be ordinarily attended or followed with sin, may be determined and concluded to be unlawful. And if we look abroad in the country, I doubt not but these two things will be found:

1. That as to those towns where there is most of this carried on among young people (as there is more of it in some places than others), it will be found, as a thing that universally holds, that the young people there are commonly a loose, vain, and irreligious generation; little regarding God, heaven, or hell, or any thing but vanity. And that commonly in those towns where most frolicking is carried on, there are the most frequent breaking out of gross sins; fornication in particular.

2. If we try it by persons: if we go through the country, we shall, for the most part, find, that those persons that are greatest frolickers, are most addicted to this practice which we are speaking of; they are the persons furthest from serious thought, and are the vainest and loosest upon other accounts. And whence should this be, if such a practice were not sinful, or had not a natural tendency to lead persons into sin?

And furthermore, I appeal to the experience of you here present, as to what you have found in yourselves. I desire those of you that have made pretences of serious religion, and saving piety, and have formerly pretended to keep up religion in your closet, and your own souls, that you would seriously ask yourselves, whether or no you have not found, that this practice has indisposed you to serious religion, and taken off your minds from it? Has it not tended to your neglect of secret prayer? Have you not found, that after you have been to a frolick, you have been more backward to that duty? And, if you have not wholly neglected it, have you not found that you have been abundantly more slighty, and ready to turn it off in any manner, and glad to have done with it? And more backward to reading and serious meditation, and such things? And that your mind has been exceedingly diverted from religion, and that for some time?

I do not send you far off to find out whether this custom be not of bad tendency—not beyond the sea, to some distant country; I send you no further than to your own breast to examine your own experience in this matter; let the matter be determined by that.

And then again, let us try this custom by the effect the outpouring of the Spirit of God on a people has with respect to it This we are under great advantage to do; because there has lately been here in this place, the most remarkable outpouring of the Spirit of God that has ever been in New England, and, it may be, in the world, since the apostles' days. And it is known, that before this, that custom of young peoples' frolicking did prevail in the town And here we all know the effect it had: it put an end to it.—It was a custom that was wholly done with.—It was altogether laid aside; and was so for several years.

It has been already shown, that there is no account can be given why the Spirit of God, and the flourishing of religion should abolish such a custom, unless it be because that custom is, either in its nature or tendency, an enemy to the Spirit of God and religion.

The fruits of the Spirit of God are good, and I hope there are none that have the blasphemy to say otherwise. And therefore it is good that this custom should be removed; for this is plainly one of the effects of the Spirit of God. And if so, it is because the custom is bad, either in its nature or tendency; otherwise there would be no good in its being removed. The Spirit of God abolished this custom for this reason, because if it had been kept up in the town, it would have had a direct tendency to hinder that work that the Spirit was about to do amongst us. This was undeniably the reason.

Supposing such a custom had been begun and set up by the young people all over the town, in the midst of the time of the late oupouring of the Spirit, all of a sudden, would any wise persons, that have truly the cause of religion at heart, rejoice at it? Would not every one at first thought have concluded, without any hesitation, that it was a thing that looked darkly upon the interest of religion, and there was great danger that it would take off people's minds from religion, and make them vain; and so put an end to the flourishing of religion? Would not every considerate person in this town have thought thus of it? And if such a custom would have had an ill tendency then so it will now.

Objection. The town is not in such circumstances now as it was then. And though it might have done hurt then, by putting an end to the great concern; yet now it may do no hurt: for there is now no such great concern to be put an end to by it.

Answer. Though the town is not in such circumstances now as it was then, yet it ought to be; there ought to be as much engagedness of mind about religion; as much concern among sinners, and as much engagedness among the godly, as then: and it is to our shame that there is not. And if such a practice would have tended to destroy such a religious concern then, it certainly tends to prevent it now. It is a rule that will hold, that that which has a tendency to destroy a thing when it is, tends to prevent it when it is not. And are we not praying from Sabbath to Sabbath, and from day to day, for such a concern again? And do not those of you that pretend to be converted, that have lately set up this custom, pray for the same? Are you a convert, a saint, and yet not desire that here should be any more pouring out of the Spirit of God? The town has cause to be ashamed of such converts, if it has any such. And if ye do, why do you do what tends to prevent it?

Again, Let this practice be tried by the effect that a general decay of religion has with respect to it. Now we have a trial; it is now a time that religion is greatly decayed amongst us; and the effect is that this custom comes in with this decay. Young people begin again to set up their old custom of frolicking, and spending great part of the night in it, to the violation of family order. What is the reason, if this custom is not bad, either in its nature or tendency, that it did not come in before, when religion was lively? Why does it stay till it can take the advantage of the withdrawment of religion? This is a sign that it is a custom that shuns a spirit of lively religion, as darkness shuns the light, and never comes in until light withdraws.

And here again, I would send persons to their own experience. How did this practice come in with you in particular: you that two or three years ago, seemed to be engaged in religion? Did it not come in, did you not begin to practise it, as the sense of religion wore off? And what is the matter? Why did not you set up the practice then, when your heart was taken up about reading, meditation, and secret prayer to God? If this do not at all stand in the way of them, and is no hinderance to them, why was you not engaged in both together? What account can you give of it? Why did you leave off this prac-

tice and custom, or abstain from it? To what purpose is this changing? One while it must be avoided as evil, and another while practised and pleaded for as good. The making such an alteration does not look well, nor will it be for the honor of religion in the eye of the world. For whether the practice be lawful or not, yet such a thing will surely be improved to our disadvantage. For your avoiding of it then, has this appearance, in the eye of the country, that then you condemned it; and therefore your now returning to it will appear to them as backsliding in you. Such changelings are evermore in the eye of the world, greatly to the dishonor of the profession they are of, let it be what it will.

Indeed this custom, as it was practised, does not only tend to sin, but is in itself very disorderly, sinful, and shameful. For it is attended late in the night, and in the dead of the night, to the neglect of family prayer, and violating all family order, which is disorder and profaneness. Is it lawful to rob God of his ordinary sacrifices, for the sake of your pleasure, diversion, and jollity? Are you of that mind that it is a decent thing, that the stated worship of the great God should give way to your mirth, and your diversions? Is this the way of God's holy children, to talk after this manner? Those works that are commonly done in the dead of the night, seem to have a black mark set upon them by the apostle, and Christians are exhorted to avoid them: Rom. xiii. 12, 13, "Let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness; not in chambering and wantonness." The word here rendered rioting, is of far different signification from the term as used in our laws: for the forcible doing an unlawful thing, by three or more persons assembled together for that purpose. Words, as they are terms in the law, are often used very much beside their common signification. But the word here properly signifies, a disorderly convention of persons to spend their time together in pleasure and jollity. So the word is commonly used in Scripture: Prov. xxiii. 20, "Be not amongst riotous eaters of flesh." Prov. xxviii. 7, "He that is a companion of riotous men, shameth his father." Luke xv. 13, "Wasted his substance with riotous living."

Again, a black mark seems to be set on such in Scripture, as in 1 Thess. v. 5—8, "Ye are all children of the light, and children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that be drunk, are drunken in the night.

Many of you that have lately set up this practice of frolicking and jollity, profess to be children of the light and of the day; and not to be the children of darkness. Therefore walk as in the day; and do not those works of darkness that are commonly done at unseasonable hours of the night.

Such things are not only condemned by the apostle, but are looked upon as infamous through the world in all ages among sober sort of people; and all past writings show it. Therefore it is a thing of bad report, and so forbidden, Phil. iv. 8: "Whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, any praise, think on these things."

Object. 1. But the wise man allows of this practice, when he says, Eccles. iii. 4, "There is a time to mourn, and a time to dance."

Answer. This is nothing to the purpose; for the utmost that any can pretend that it proves, is denying it to be unlawful, and allowing it may be used under some circumstances; but not at all, that dancing and other things used by our young people in their frolicks are lawful in those circumstances, any more than what is said in the same chapter, verse 3, "there is a time to kill," proves that it is lawful for a man to commit murder.

To deny that dancing, under any circumstances whatever, was lawful, would be absurd: for there was a religious dancing in the Jewish church, that was a way of expressing their spiritual mirth. So David danced before the Lord. And he calls upon others to praise God in the dance. So there may be other circumstances wherein dancing may not be unlawful. But all this makes nothing to the present purpose; to prove that this particular custom, that we have been speaking of among our young people, is not of a bad tendency. And besides, when the wise man says, there is a time to dance, that does not prove, that the dead of the night is the time for it. The same wise man doth not justify carnal mirth, but condemns it: Eccles. ii. 2, "I said of laughter, It is mad; and of mirth, What doeth it?"

Object. 2. If we avoid all such things, it will be the way for our young people to be ignorant how to behave themselves in company.

Answer. But consider what this objection comes to. It certainly comes to this, viz., that the pouring out of the Spirit of God upon a people, tends to banish all good conduct, good breeding, and decent behavior from among them; and to sink them down into clownishness and barbarity. And if such a pouring out of the Spirit of God, as has been amongst us, should be continued, it would tend to have this effect; for that we have seen by experience. The Spirit of God did actually put an end to this practice among us.

But who is it amongst us that is not ashamed to make such an objection? Will any of our young converts talk thus? Will you that think you were converted by the late pouring out of the Spirit of God, and are made holy persons, heirs of eternal life, talk so blasphemously of it?

If our young people are resolute still to go on, notwithstanding all that has been said, I hope that those of them that call themselves converted, will first find out some rational, satisfying answer to the arguments that have been used against it. This at least may be reasonably expected of them, seeing they make such a profession. You have this day been partaking of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, and therein solemnly renewed your profession.

If after such light set before you, and such mercy given, you will go on, be it known to you, that your eating now, and at other times, will prove only an eating and drinking judgment to yourselves.

And I desire heads of families, if they have any government over their children, or any command of their own houses, would not tolerate their children in such practices, nor suffer such conventions in their houses.

I do not desire that young people should be abridged of any lawful and proper liberties.—But this custom can be of no benefit or service in the world; it tends only to mischief.

Satan doubtless would be glad to have such an interest amongst us as he used to have; and is therefore striving to steal in, while we are sleeping; but let us rouse up ourselves, and vigorously oppose his encroachments.

I shall repeat those words of the apostle, Rom. xiii. 12—14, and leave them to the serious consideration of all persons, old and young: "The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."

SERMON XXXVIII.

THE SIN OF THEFT AND OF INJUSTICE.

Exodus xx. 15.—Thou shalt not steal.

This you all know is one of the ten commandments which constitute a summary of man's duty, as revealed by God. God made many revelations to the children of Israel in the wilderness by Moses: but this made in the ten commandments is the chief. Most of those other revelations, which God made to that people, contained ceremonial or judicial laws; but this contains the moral law. The most of those other laws respected the Jewish nation; but here is a summary of the laws that are binding on all mankind. Those were to last till Christ should come, and have set up the Christian church; these are of perpetual obligation, and last to the end of the world. God everywhere, by Moses and the prophets, manifests a far greater regard to the duties of these commands, than to any of the rites of the ceremonial law.

These commands were the first commands that were given forth at Mount Sinai, before any of the precepts of the ceremonial or judicial laws. They were delivered by a great voice out of the midst of fire, which made all the people in the camp tremble, and afterwards were engraven on the tables of stone, and laid up in the ark: the first table containing the four first commandments, which teach our duty to God; the second table containing the six last, which teach our duty to man. The sum of the duties of the first table is contained in that which Christ says is the first and great commandment of the law: Matt. xxii. 37, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." The sum of what is required in the second table, is what Christ calls the second command, like unto the first: verse 39, "The second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

Of the commands of this second table of the law, the first, which is the fifth of the ten, refers to that respect and honor which is due to our neighbor; the second respects his life; the third his chastity; the fourth his estate; the fifth his good name; the sixth and last respects his possessions and enjoyments in general. It is that command which respects our neighbor's estate, and which is the fourth command of the second table, and the eighth of the whole decalogue, on which I am to insist at this time.

Here I shall not raise any doctrine from the words, as the subject of my discourse, but shall make the command itself, as the words of it lie before us in the decalogue, my subject. And that I may treat of this command in a manner as brief as may be, I shall not stand to show, first, what duties are required by the command, and then what sins are forbidden in it: but as the words of the commandment are in the form of a prohibition, forbidding a certain kind of sin; so I shall handle them, by considering particularly what it is that this command forbids. The sin that is forbidden in this command, is called stealing; yet we cannot reasonably understand it only of that act, which in the more ordinary and strict sense of the word, is called stealing.

But the iniquity which this command forbids, may be summarily expressed thus:

An unjust usurping of our neighbor's property, without his consent.

So much is doubtless comprehended in the text; yet this comprehends much

more than is implied in the ordinary use of the word, *stealing;* which is only a secret taking of that which is another's, from his possession, without either his consent or knowledge. But the ten commands are not to be limited to the strictest sense of the words, but are to be understood in such a latitude, as to include all things that are of that nature or kind. Hence Christ reproves the Pharisees' interpretation of the sixth command, Matt. v. 21, 22; and also their interpretation of the seventh command; see ver. 27, 28; by which it appears that the commands are not to be understood as forbidding only these individual sins, which are expressly mentioned, in the strictest sense of the expressions; but all other things of the same nature or kind.

Therefore undoubtedly what is forbidden in this command is not only that private robbing of our neighbor, which is called stealing in the strictest sense of the expression; but all unjust usurpation of our neighbor's property. Here it may be observed, that an unjust usurpation of our neighbor's property is twofold; it may be,

(1.) Either by withholding what is our neighbor's, or,

(2.) By taking it from him.

First, It consists in an unjust withholding of what is our neighbor's. There are many ways in which persons may unjustly usurp their neighbor's property, by withholding what is his due; but I shall particularize at this time only two things.

1. The unfaithfulness of men in not fulfilling their engagements. Ordinarily when men promise any thing to their neighbor, or enter into engagements by undertaking any business with which their neighbor intrusts them, their engagements invest their neighbor with a right to that which is engaged; so that if they withhold it, they usurp that which belongs to their neighbor. So it is, when men break their promises, because they find them to be inconvenient, and they cannot fulfil them without difficulty and trouble; or merely because they have altered their minds since they promised. They think they have not consulted their own interest in the promise which they have made, and that if they had considered the matter as much before they promised as they have since, they should not have promised. Therefore they take the liberty to set their own promises aside. Besides, sometimes persons violate this command, by neglecting to fulfil their engagements, through a careless, negligent spirit.

They violate this command, in withholding what belongs to their neighbor, when they are not faithful in any business which they have undertaken to do for their neighbor. If their neighbor have hired them to labor for him for a certain time, and they be not careful well to husband the time; if they be hired to day's labor, and be not careful to improve the day, as they have reason to think that he who hired them justly expected of them; or if they be hired to accomplish such a piece of work, and be not careful to do it well, but do it slightly, do it not as if it were for themselves, or as they would have others do for them, when they in like manner betrust them with any business of theirs; or if they be intrusted with any particular affair, which they undertake, but use not that care, contrivance, and diligence, to manage it so as will be to the advantage of him who intrusts them, and as they would manage it, or would insist that it should be managed, if the affair were their own: in all these cases they unjustly withhold what belongs to their neighbor.

2. Another way in which men unjustly withhold what is their neighbor's, is, *in neglecting to pay their debts.* Sometimes this happens, because they run so far into debt that they cannot reasonably hope to be able to pay their debts; and this they do, either through pride and affectation of living above their cir-

cumstances; or through a grasping, covetous disposition, or some other corrupt principle. Sometimes they neglect to pay their debts from carelessness of spirit about it, little concerning themselves whether they are paid or not, taking no care to go to their creditor, or to send to him; and if they see him from time to time, they say nothing about their debts.

Sometimes they neglect to pay their debts, because it would put them to some inconvenience. The reason why they do it not, is not because they cannot do it, but because they cannot do it so conveniently as they desire; and so they rather choose to put their creditor to inconvenience by being without what properly belongs to him, than to put themselves to inconvenience by being without what doth not belong to them, and what they have no right to detain. In any of these cases they unjustly usurp the property of their neighbor.

Sometimes persons have that by them with which they could pay their debts if they would; but they want to lay out their money for something else, to buy gay clothing for their children, or to advance their estates, or for some such end. They have other designs in hand, which must fail, if they pay their debts. When men thus withhold what is due, they unjustly usurp what is not their own. Sometimes they neglect to pay their debts, and their excuse for it is, that their creditor doth not need it; that he hath a plentiful estate, and can well bear to lie out of his money. But if the creditor be ever so rich, that gives no right to the debtor to withhold from him that which belongs to him. If it be due, it ought to be paid; for that is the very notion of its being due. It is no more lawful to withhold from a man what is his due, without his consent, because he is rich and able to do without it, than it is lawful to steal from a man because he is rich, and able to bear the loss.

Secondly, The second way wherein men usurp their neighbor's property is, by unjustly taking it from him.

The principal ways of doing this seem to be these four, by negligence, by fraud, by violence, or by stealing, strictly so called.

1. The first way of unjustly depriving our neighbor of that which is his, is by negligence, by carelessly neglecting that which is expected by neighbors, one of another, and is necessary to prevent our neighbor's suffering in his estate by us, or by any thing that is ours; and necessary in order that neighbors may live one by another, without suffering in their lawful interests, rights and possessions, one by another.

For instance, when proper care is not taken by men to prevent their neighbor's suffering in the produce of his fields or inclosures, from their cattle, or other brute creatures; which may be either through negligence with regard to their creatures themselves, in keeping those that are unruly, and giving them their liberty, though they know that they are not fit to have their liberty, and are commonly wont to break into their neighbor's inclosures greatly to his damage; or through a neglect of that which is justly expected of them, to defend others' fields from suffering by the neighborhood of their own. In such cases men are guilty of unjustly taking from their neighbor what is his property.

It is said in the law of Moses, Exod. xxii. 5: "If a man shall cause a field or vineyard to be eaten, and shall put in his beast, and shall feed in another man's field; of the best of his own field and of the best of his vineyard shall he make restitution." Now a man may be unjustly the cause of his neighbor's field or vineyard being eaten, either by putting in his beast, and so doing what he should not do; or by neglecting to do what he should do, to prevent his beast from getting into his field. What is said in the 144th Psalm, and two last verses, supposes that a people who carry themselves as becomes a people

whose God is the Lord, will take thorough care that beasts do not break into their neighbor's inclosures: "That our oxen may be strong to labor; that there be *no breaking in* nor *going out;* that there be no complaining in the streets. Happy is that people that is in such a case; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord."

2. Taking away that which is our neighbor's by fraud, or by deceiving him, is another mode of usurping our neighbor's property. This is the case, when men in their dealings take advantage of their neighbor's ignorance, or oversight, or mistake, to get something from him; or when they make their gains, by concealing the defects of what they sell, putting off bad for good, though this be not done by speaking falsely, but only by keeping silence; or when they take a higher price than what they sell is really worth, and more than they could get for it if the concealed defects were known: or when they sell that for good, which indeed is not merchantable, which is condemned in Amos viii. 6: "Yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat."

If a man puts off something to another with defects that are concealed, knowing that the other receives it as good, and pays such a price for it, under a notion of its having no remarkable defect but what he sees, and takes the price which the buyer under that notion offers; the seller knows that he takes a price of the buyer for that which the buyer had not of him; for the buyer is deceived, and pays for those things which he finds wanting in what he buys. It is just the same thing, as if a man should take a payment that another offers him, through a mistake, for that which he never had of him, thinking that he had it of him, when he had it not.

So a man fraudulently takes away that which is his neighbor's when he gets his money from him by falsely commending what he hath to sell, above what he knows to be the true quality of it; and attributes those good qualities to it which he knows it has not: or if he does not that, yet sets forth the good qualities in a degree beyond what he knows to be the true degree; or speaks of the defects and ill qualities of what he has to sell, as if they were much less than he knows they are: or, on the contrary, when the buyer will cry down what he is about to buy, contrary to his real opinion of the value of it.—These things, however common they be in men's dealings one with another, are nothing short of iniquity, and fraud, and a great breach of this commandment, upon which we are discoursing: Prov. xx. 14, "It is nought, it is nought, saith the buyer; but when he is gone his way then he boasteth."

Many other ways there are, whereby men blind and deceive one another in their trading, and whereby they fraudulently and unjustly take away that which is their neighbor's.

3. Another mode of unjustly invading and taking away our neighbor's property, is by violence. This violence may be done in different degrees.

(1.) Men may take away their neighbor's goods either by mere open violence, either making use of superior strength, forcibly taking away any thing that is his; or by express or implicit threatenings forcing him to yield up what he has into their hands; as is done in open robbery or piracy. Or,

(2.) By making use of some advantages which they have over their neighbor, in their dealings with him, to constrain him to yield to their gaining unreasonably of him; as when they take advantage of their neighbor's poverty to extort unreasonably from him for those things that he is under a necessity of procuring for himself or family. This is an oppression against which God hath shown a great displeasure in his word: Levit. xxv. 14, "And if thou sell aught unto thy neighbor, or buyest aught of thy neighbor, ye shall not oppress one another."

Prov. xxii. 22, 23, "Rob not the poor, because he is poor, neither oppress the afflicted in the gate: for the Lord will plead their cause, and spoil the souls of those that spoil them." And Amos iv. 1. 2, "Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that are in the mount of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy, the Lord hath sworn in his holiness, that he will take you away with hooks, and your posterity with fish-hooks."

When the necessity of poor indigent people is the very thing whence others take occasion to raise the price of provisions, even above the market; this is such an oppression. There are many poor people whose families are in such necessity for bread, that they, in their extremity, will give almost any price for it, rather than go without it. Those who have to sell, though hereby they have an advantage in their hands, yet surely should not take the advantage to raise the price of provisions. We should doubtless think that we had just cause to complain, if we were in such necessity as they are, and were reduced to their straits, and were treated in this manner: and let us remember, that it is owing only to the distinguishing goodness of God to us, that we are not in their circumstances; and whatever our present circumstances are, yet we know not but that the time may still come when their case may be ours.

Men may oppress others, though they be not poor, if they will take advantage of any particular necessities of their neighbor unreasonably to extort from him. The case may be so at particular seasons, that those who are not poor, may stand in particular and extraordinary need of what we have, or what we can do for them; so that it would be greatly to their disadvantage or loss to be without it. Now to take advantage of their urgent circumstances, to get from them an unreasonable price, is a violent dealing with our neighbors.

It is very unreasonable talk to say, that such and such men are so rich, and get money so much more easily than I, that it is no hurt for me to take advantage when they are in special need, and make them give me, for work that I do for them, a great deal more than I would desire to ask of other men. Let such consider, whether, if they should by any means hereafter get forward in the world, and come to have plentiful estates, they would like that persons should act upon such principles towards them. That men are rich, gives us no more right to take away from them what is theirs in this way, than it does to steal from them, because they come easily by their property, and can do without it better than we.

Again, another thing that is a kind of violent taking from our neighbor what is his, is taking the advantage of the law to gain from others, when their cause in honesty and conscience is just and good. The circumstances of mankind, their rights, possessions, and dealings one with another, are so various, that it is impossible that any body of human laws should be contrived to suit all possible cases and circumstances. Hence the best laws may be abused and perverted to purposes contrary to the general design of laws, which is to maintain the rights and secure the properties of mankind. Human laws have a regard due to them, but always in subordination to the higher laws of God and nature.

Therefore when it so happens, that we have an advantage by the law, to gain what the laws of moral honesty allow not, it is an oppression and violence to take the advantage. That human laws allow it, will not excuse us before God, the Judge of the world, who will judge us another day by his own laws, and not by the laws of the commonwealth.

4. The fourth way of unjustly taking from our neighbor that which is his, is stealing so called. All unjust ways of taking away, or invading, or usurping

what is our neighbor's, are called stealing in the most extensive use of the word, and all is included in the expression in this command. Yet the word stealing, as it is most commonly used, is not of so great extent, and intends not all unjust invasion of our neighbor's property, but only a particular kind of unjust taking. So that in common speech, when we speak of fraudulent dealings, of extortion, unfaithfulness in our trust, and of stealing, we understand different sins by these expressions, though they are a usurpation of what is our neighbor's.

Stealing, strictly so called, may be thus defined: *A designed taking of our neighbor's goods from him, without his consent or knowledge.* It is not merely a withholding of what is our neighbor's, but a taking away; and therein it differs from unfaithfulness in our undertakings and betrustments, and also from negligence in the payment of debts. It is a designed or wilful depriving of our neighbor of what is his, and so differs from wronging our neighbor in his estate through carelessness or negligence. It is a taking of our neighbor's goods without his knowledge; it is a private, clandestine taking away, and so differs from robbery by open violence.

So also it differs from extortion; for in that the person knows what is taken from him. The aim of him that takes, is no other than that he should know it; for he makes use of other means than his ignorance, to obtain what is his neighbor's, viz., violence to constrain him to give it up. So also it differs from fraudulent dealing or trading. For though in fraudulent dealing, the lawful possessor doth not understand the way and means, by which he parts with his goods, and by which his neighbor becomes possessed of them; yet he knows the fact: the deceiver designedly conceals the manner only. But in stealing, strictly so called, he that takes, intends not that it shall be known that he takes. It also differs from extortion and fraudulent dealing, in that it is wholly without the consent of the owner. For in extortion, though there be no free consent; yet the consent of the owner is in some sort gained, though by violent and oppressive means. So in fraudulent dealing consent is in some sort obtained, though it be by deceit. But in stealing no kind of consent is obtained.

A person may steal from another, yet not take his goods without the knowledge of the owner; because he may know of it accidentally, he may see what is done, unawares to the thief. Therefore I have defined stealing, a designed taking without the consent or knowledge of the owner. If it be accidentally known, yet it is not known in the design and intention of the thief. The thief is so far at least private in it, that he gives no notice to the owner in the time of it. It must be also without the consent of the owner. A person may take without the knowledge of the owner, and yet not take without his consent. The owner may not know of his taking at the time, or of his taking any particular things; yet there may be his implicit consent. There may have been a general consent, if not expressed, yet implied. The circumstances of the affair may be such, that his consent may well be presumed upon, either from an established custom, allowed by all, or from the nature of the case; the thing being of such a nature, that it may well be presumed that none would refuse their consent; as in the case of a person's accidentally passing through his neighbor's vineyard in Israel, and eating his fill of grapes; or from the circumstances of the persons, as is the case, in many instances, of the freedom which near neighbors and intimate friends often take, and of that boldness which they use with respect to each other's goods.

In all such cases, though the owner do not particularly know what is done, yet he that takes, does it not with any contrived, designed concealment. And though there is no express, particular consent, yet there is a consent either im-

plied, or justly presumed upon; and he that takes, doth not designedly and advertently do it without consent.

It may happen in some cases, that one may take the goods of another, both without his knowledge and consent, either explicit, or implicit, but through mistake; yet he may not be guilty of stealing. Therefore the DESIGN of him who takes must come into consideration. When he designedly takes away that which is his neighbor's without his consent or knowledge, then he steals. So that if it should happen, that he has both his consent and knowledge, without his design, he steals. And if it so happen that he takes without either his neighbor's consent or knowledge, and yet without his own design, he steals not. I desire therefore that this, which I take to be the true definition of theft or stealing, may be borne in mind, viz., a designed taking of our neighbor's goods, without his consent or knowledge; because it is needful to clear up many things which I have yet to say on this subject.

Here I shall particularly take notice of some things, by which some persons may be ready to excuse themselves, in privately taking their neighbor's goods, which however cannot be a just excuse for it, nor will they make such a taking not to be stealing.

1. That the person whose goods are privately taken, owes or is in debt to him that takes them. Possibly some may be ready to excuse a clandestine taking of their neighbor's goods, with this plea. They may be ready to say, that they do not take that which is their neighbor's, they take that which is their own, because as much is due to them, their neighbor owes them as much, and unjustly detains it, and they know not whether ever they shall get their due of him. Their neighbor wont do them right, and therefore they must right themselves.

But such pleas as these will not justify a man in going in a private and clandestine manner to take away any thing of his neighbor's from his possession, without his consent or knowledge; but nevertheless his doing this is properly stealing. For though something of his neighbor's, which is as valuable as what he takes, may be due to him; that doth not give him such a right to his neighbor's goods, that he may take any thing that is his, according to his own pleasure, and at what time, and in what manner he pleases. That his neighbor is in debt to him, doth not give him a right to take it upon himself to be his own judge, so that he may judge for himself, which of his neighbor's goods shall be taken from him to discharge the debt; and that he may act merely according to his own private judgment and pleasure in such a case, without so much as acquainting his neighbor with the affair.

In order to warrant such a proceeding as this, every thing that his neighbor has, must be his. A man may not take indifferently what he pleases out of a number of goods, without the consent or knowledge of any other person, unless all is his own, to be disposed of as he pleases. Such a way of using goods according to our own pleasure, taking what we will, and at what time we will, can be warranted by nothing but a dominion over the whole. And though he who is in debt may be guilty of great injustice in detaining what is due to another; yet it doth not thence follow, but that he that takes from him, may also be guilty of great injustice towards him. The course he takes to right himself may be very irregular and unreasonable; and such a course, that if universally allowed and pursued in such cases, would throw human society into confusion.

When men obtain a property in any of the possessions of this life, at the same time they are also invested with a right to remain in possession of them,

till they are deprived of them in some fair and regular proceeding. Every man has a right to hold his estate, and keep possession of his rights and properties, so that no other can lawfully use them as his own, until he either parts with them of his own accord, or until it be taken from him according to some established rule, in a way of open justice. Therefore he who, under pretence of having just demands upon his neighbor, privately takes his goods without his consent, takes them unjustly, and is guilty of stealing.

2. Much less will it make such a private taking not to be stealing, that he who takes, has, in way of kindness or gift, done for the person from whom he takes, as much as is equivalent to the value of what he takes. If a man do his neighbor some considerable kindness, whether in labor, or in something that he gives him, what he does or gives is supposed to be done voluntarily, and he is not to make his neighbor debtor for it; and therefore if any thing be privately taken away, upon any such consideration, it is gross stealing.

For instance, when any person needs to have any services done for him, where a considerable number of hands are necessary; it is common for the neighborhood to meet together and join in helping their neighbor, and frequently some provision is made for their entertainment. If any person who hath assisted on such an occasion, and is a partaker at such an entertainment, shall think within himself, the service I have done is worth a great deal more than what I shall eat and drink here, and therefore shall take liberty privately to take of the provision set before him, to carry away with him, purposely concealing the matter from him who hath entertained him, this is gross stealing; and it is a very ridiculous plea which they make to excuse so unmanly and vile an act.

Persons in such cases may say to themselves, that the provision is made for them, and set before them; that it is a time wherein considerable liberty is given, and they think, seeing they have done so much for their host, they may take something more than they eat and drink there. But then let them be open in it; let them acquaint those with it who make the entertainment; and let it not be done in any wise, in a secret, clandestine manner, with the least design or attempt to avoid their notice: on the contrary, let care be taken to give them notice and obtain their consent.

When persons do such things in a private manner, they condemn themselves by their own act; their doing what they do secretly, shows that they are conscious themselves, that they go beyond what it is expected they should do, and do what would not be allowed, if it were known. Such an act, however light they may make of it, is abominable theft, and what any person of religion or any sense of the dignity of their own nature, would to the greatest degree abhor and detest.

3. It is not sufficient to make a private taking without consent, not to be stealing, that it is but a small matter that is taken. If the thing be of little value, yet if it be worth a purposed concealing from the owner, the value is great enough to render the taking of it proper theft. If it be pretended that the thing is of so small consequence, that it is not worth asking for; then surely it is not worth a purposed concealing from the owner, when it is taken. He who, under this pretence, conceals his taking, in the very act contradicts his own pretence; for his action shows that he apprehends, or at least suspects, that, as small a matter as it is, the owner would not like the taking of it, if he knew it; otherwise the taker would not desire to conceal it.

The owner of any goods, and not other people, is the proper judge, whether what he owns be of such a value, that it is worth his while to keep it, and to

refuse his consent to the taking of it from him. He who possesses, and not he who takes away, has a right to judge of what consequence his possessions are to him. He has a right to set what value he pleases on them, and to treat them according to that value. Besides, merely that a thing is of small value, cannot give a right to others, purposely and designedly to take it away, without the knowledge or consent of the owner. Because if this only gives a right, then all have a right to take things of small value; and at this rate a great number of persons, each of them taking from a man that which is of small value, might take away all he has.

Therefore, it will not justify persons, in going purposely to take such things as fruit from the trees, or gardens, or fields of their neighbors, without their knowledge or consent, that the things which they take are things of small value; nor is that sufficient to render such an act, not an act of theft, properly so called. This shows also that the smallness of the value of what is privately taken at feasts and entertainments, doth not render the taking of such things, not stealing.

The small value of a thing may in some cases justify an occasional taking of things, so far as we may from thence, and from what is generally allowed, reasonably presume that the owner gives his consent. But if that be the case, and persons really take, as not supposing any other than that the owner consents to such occasional taking, then, he that takes will not at all endeavor to do what he does secretly, nor in any measure to avoid notice. But merely the smallness of the value of a thing, can never justify a secret taking of what is another's.

APPLICATION.

1. The first use I would make of this doctrine, is to warn against all injustice and dishonesty, as to what appertains to our neighbor's temporal goods or possessions. Let me warn all to avoid all ways of unjustly invading or usurping what is their neighbor's, and let me press that exhortation of the apostle, Rom. xii. 27, "Provide things honest in the sight of all men;" which implies, that those things which we provide for ourselves, and use as our own, should be such as we come honestly by; and especially that we should avoid all clandestine or underhand ways of obtaining any thing that is our neighbor's, either by fraudulent dealing, or by that taking without our neighbor's knowledge and consent, of which we have been speaking.

I warn you to beware of dishonesty in withholding what is your neighbor's, either by unfaithfulness to your trust in any business which you undertake, or by withholding your neighbor's just and honest dues. Consider that saying of the apostle, Rom. viii. 8, "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another." Be also warned against wronging your neighbor or injuring him in his inclosures, or in any of his just rights and properties, through careless neglect of what is reasonably expected by neighbors one of another, in order that they may live one by another without mutual injury. Let all beware that they bring not guilt on their souls in the sight of God, by taking an advantage to oppress any person. Especially beware of taking advantage of others' poverty to extort from them: for God will defend their cause, and you will be no gainers by such oppression.

Beware also of all injustice by deceitful and fraudulent dealing. Many of you have much to do with others in a way of traffick in buying and selling You doubtless meet with abundance of temptation to fraud, and have need to keep a strong guard upon yourselves. There are many temptations to false

speaking in trading, to speaking that which is false, both about what you would buy and what you have to sell. There are, in buying, temptations to do as in Prov. xx. 14, "It is nought, it is nought, saith the buyer." There are many temptations to take indirect courses, to blind those with whom you deal, about the qualities of what you have to sell, to diminish the defects of your commodities, or to conceal them, and to put off things for good which are bad. And there are doubtless many other ways that men meet with temptations to deceive others, which your own experience will better suggest to you than I can.

But here I shall take occasion to speak of a particular kind of fraud, which is very aggravated, and is rather a defrauding of God than man. What I mean is, *the giving of that which is bad for good in public contributions.* Though it be matter of great shame and lamentation, that it should be so in such a place as this; yet it is to be feared, from what has sometimes been observed, that there are some persons among us, who, when there is a public contribution to be attended for the poor, or some other pious and charitable use, do sometimes take that opportunity *to put off their bad money.* That which they find, or think, their neighbors will refuse to take at their hands, because they will have opportunity to see what is offered them, and to observe the badness of it, even *that* they therefore take opportunity to put off to God.

Hereby they save their credit; for they apprehend that they shall be concealed. They appear with others to go to the contribution, and it is not known but that they put in that which is good. But they cheat the church of God, and defraud the expectations of the poor: or rather they lie to God: for those who receive what is given, stand as Christ's receivers, and not as acting for themselves in this matter.

They that do thus, do that which is very much of the same nature with that sin, against which God denounces that dreadful curse in Mal. i. 14, "Cursed be the deceiver which hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a great King, saith the Lord of Hosts, and my name is dreadful among the Heathen." *That hath in his flock a male,* i. e., that hath in his flock that which is good and fit to be offered to God: for it was the male of the flock principally that was appointed, in the law of Moses, to be offered in sacrifice to God. He has in his flock that which is good, but he vows and sacrifices to the Lord, "the torn, the lame, and the sick," as it is said in the foregoing verse: "Ye said also, Behold what a weariness is it, and ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of Hosts; and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hands? saith the Lord."

Contributions in the Christian church come in the room of sacrifices in the Jewish church: mercy comes in the room of sacrifice. And what is offered in the way of mercy is as much offered to God, as the sacrifices of old were. For what is done to the poor is done to Christ, and he that hath pity on the poor, lendeth to the Lord, Prov. xix. 17. The Jews that offered the sick and lame of the flock, knew that if they had offered it to their governor, and had attempted to put it off, as part of the tribute or public taxes due to their earthly rulers, it would not be accepted, and therefore they were willing to put it off to God, as in the 8th verse of this chapter: "And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? Offer it now unto thy governor, will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of Hosts."

So those persons who purposely put bad money into contributions, know that what they put in would not be accepted if they should offer it to pay their

public taxes. Yea, they know that their *neighbors* would not accept it off their hands: and therefore they are willing to save themselves, by putting it off to God.

This practice is also very much of the nature of the sin of Ananias and Sapphira. What they offered was by way of contribution for charitable uses. The brethren sold what they had, and brought it into a common stock, and put all under the care of deacons, that the poor might every one be supplied. Ananias and Sapphira brought a part of their possessions, and put it into the common stock; and their sin was, that they put it in for more than it really was. It was but a part of what they had, and they put it in, and would have it accepted, as if it had been all. So those among us, of whom I am speaking, put off what they put into the charitable stock, for more than it is. For they put it in, under the notion that it is something of some value; they intend it shall be so taken by the church that sees them go to the contribution, when indeed they put in nothing at all.

Ananias and Sapphira were charged with lying to God, and doing an act of fraud towards God himself, in what they did: Acts v. 4, "While it remained, was it not thine own? And after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." So those who knowingly put bad money for good into a contribution for a charitable use, as much as in them lies commit an act of fraud and deceit towards God. For the deacons who receive what is contributed, receive it not in their own names, but as Christ's receivers. I hope these things may be sufficient to have said on this head, and enough to deter every one from ever daring to do such a thing for the future.

Again, another thing I would warn you against, is, stealing, properly and strictly so called; or designedly taking away any of your neighbor's goods without his consent or knowledge. And especially I would now take occasion to warn against a practice which is very common in the country, particularly among children and young people: and that is, stealing fruit from their neighbor's trees or inclosures. There is a licentious liberty taken by many children and young people, in making bold with their neighbor's fruit; and it is to be feared, that they are too much countenanced in it by their parents and many elder people.

I am sensible, that the great thing which is pleaded, and made very much the ground of this liberty which is taken, and so much tolerated, is a very abusive and unreasonable construction and application of that text of Scripture in Deut. xxiii. 24: "When thou comest into thy neighbor's vineyard, then thou mayest eat grapes thy fill. But thou shalt not put any in thy vessel." Because this text seems to be so much mistaken and misimproved, I shall therefore endeavor particularly to state the matter of persons taking their neighbor's fruit, and to set it in a just and clear light as concerning this text.

1. I shall show what the liberty was which was given in it.
2. What the ground of that liberty was.
3. What would, and what would not, be parallel with it, among us.

1. I am to show what the liberty was which was given in this text. It was to eat their fill of grapes when they occasionally came into, or passed through, their neighbor's vineyard, and not that they should go thither on purpose to eat grapes. This is manifest by the manner of expression: "When thou comest into thy neighbor's vineyard, thou mayest eat;" i. e., when thou art come thither on some other occasion. If God had meant to give them leave to come thither on purpose, for no other end, it would not have been expressed so; but

rather thus, Thou mayest come into thy neighbor's vineyard, and eat grapes thy fill.

2. I shall show what must be supposed to be the grounds of this liberty, which were these two things:

(1.) That such were the circumstances of that people, and vineyards among them were so common, that there was no danger that this liberty would be attended with ill consequence. It is manifest throughout the history of Israel, that vineyards among them were so common that the people in general had them. Every husbandman among them was a vine-dresser; and a great part of the business of a husbandman among them, consisted in dressing and taking care of his vineyards. Grapes seem to have been the most common sort of fruit that they had. Besides, there was no liberty given for persons to go on purpose to a vineyard to eat the fruit of it. So that there was no danger of neighbors suffering one by another, by any such liberty.

Not only would not the owner of the vineyard suffer any thing sensible, if one or two men should act upon the liberty granted in this text; but the liberty did not tend to any such consequence, as the flocking of a great number to eat grapes, whereby the fruit of the vineyard might be much diminished.

(2.) Such were the circumstances of the case, that the consent of the owners of vineyards in general might well be presumed upon, though no such express liberty had been given. You may remember, that in the definition of stealing, I observed, that explicit consent is not always necessary; because the case may be so circumstanced, that consent may well be presumed on. And the reason consent might well be presumed on in the case of eating grapes, of which we are now speaking, is, what was observed just now, that there could be no sensible injury, nor any danger of any ill consequences, by which a man would sensibly suffer in the benefit of his vineyard.

Hence it is the more easy to determine,

3. What would, and what would not be parallel with this eating of grapes; or what would and what would not be justified by this text, among us.

(1.) If some particular person among us had a vineyard of the same kind of grapes with those which the children of Israel had, it would not justify others in using the same liberty when occasionally passing through it. Because, if some one person among us had such a vineyard, it would be a rare thing, and the rarity and scarcity of the fruit would render it of much greater value. Besides, if one man were distinguished by such a possession, to allow of such a liberty would have a much greater tendency to ill consequences, than if they were common, as they were in the land of Canaan. There would be danger of many persons falsely pretending occasions, and making occasions, to pass through the vineyard, for the sake of their fill of such rare fruit.

(2.) It would not be a parallel case, if men in general among us had each of them a few vines. That would be a very different thing from persons in general having large vineyards, as they had in Canaan. Nor would this text, in such a case, warrant men's eating their fill of grapes when occasionally passing by.

(3.) If all in general had vineyards, as they had in the land of Canaan, this text would not justify men in going into their neighbor's vineyard on purpose to eat the fruit. No such liberty is given in the text. If there had been such liberty, it might have been of ill consequence. For the sake of saving their own grapes, men might make a practice of going and sending their children into their neighbors' vineyards, to eat their fill from time to time.

But the liberty given in this text to the children of Israel, seems to be very

parallel with the liberty taken among us, to take up an apple or two and eat, as we are occasionally passing through a neighbor's orchard; which, as our circumstances are, we may do, and justly presume that we have the owner's consent. This is a liberty that we take, and find no ill consequences. It was very much so with vineyards in the land of Canaan, as it is with orchards among us. Apples in some countries are a rare fruit; and there it would by no means be warrantable for persons to take the same liberty, when occasionally passing by their neighbor's apple tree, which we warrantably take here, when going through a neighbor's orchard.

The consideration of these things will easily show the great abuse that is made of this text, when it is brought to justify such a resorting of children and others to their neighbor's fruit trees, as is sometimes, on purpose to take and eat the fruit. Indeed this practice is not only not justified by the law of Moses, but it is in itself unreasonable, and contrary to the law of nature. The consequences of it are pernicious, so that a man can have no dependence on enjoying the fruit of his labor, or the benefit of his property in those things, which possibly he may very much value. He can have no assurance but that he shall be mainly deprived of what he has, and that others will not have the principal benefit of it; and so that his end in planting and cultivating that from which he expected those fruits of the earth, which God hath given for the use, comfort, and delight of mankind, will not be in the main frustrated.

II. The second use may be of *exhortation*. Under this use, I shall confine myself to two particulars, many other things having been already spoken to.

1. I shall hence take occasion to exhort parents to restrain their children from stealing, and particularly from being guilty of theft in stealing the fruits of their neighbor's trees or fields. Christian parents are obliged to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. But how much otherwise do they bring up their children, who bring them up in theft! Which certainly those parents are guilty of, not only who directly teach them to steal, set them an example and set them about it, but also those who tolerate them in it.

Parents should take thorough and effectual care, not only to instruct their children better, and to warn them against any such thievish practices, but also thoroughly to restrain them. Children who practise stealing, make themselves vile. Stealing, by the common consent of mankind, is a very vile practice. Therefore those parents that will not take thorough care to restrain their children from such a practice, will be guilty of the same sin which God so highly resented, and awfully punished in Eli, of which we read, 1 Sam. iii. 13: "For I have told him, that I will judge his house forever, for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not."

2. I exhort those who are conscious in themselves that they have heretofore wronged their neighbor, to make restitution. This is a duty the obligation to which is exceeding plain. If a person was wronged in taking away any thing that was his, certainly he is wronged also in detaining it, and keeping it away. And all the while a person, who has been guilty of wronging his neighbor, neglects to make restitution, he lives in that wrong. He not only lives impenitent of that first wrong, of which he was guilty, but he continually wrongs his neighbor. A man who hath gotten any thing from another wrongfully, goes on to wrong him every day that he neglects to restore it, when he has opportunity to do it. The person injured did not only suffer wrong from the other when his goods were first taken from him, but he suffers new injustice from him all the while they are unjustly kept from him.

Therefore I counsel all those of you that are sensible that you have hereto-

fore wronged your neighbor, either by fraud, or oppression, or unfaithfulness, or stealing, whether lately or formerly, though it may have been a great while ago, speedily to go and make restitution for all the wrong your neighbor has suffered at your hands. That it was done long ago, doth not quit you from obligation still to restore, as much as if it had been done yesterday. This is a duty with which you must comply; you cannot be acquitted without it. As long as you neglect it, it will be unreasonable in you to expect any forgiveness of God. For what ground can you have to think that God will pardon you, as long as you wilfully still continue in the same wrong, and wrong the same man still every day, by detaining from him that which is his? You in your prayers ask of God, that he would forgive all your sins; but your very prayers are mockery, if you still wilfully continue in those sins.

Indeed, if you go and confess your faults to your neighbor, and he will freely acquit you from making restitution, you will be acquitted from the obligation; for in so doing, your neighbor gives you what before was his. But otherwise you cannot be acquitted.

Particularly I would leave this advice with all, for their direction in their behavior on their death-beds. Indeed you should not by any means put it off till you come to die; and you will run the most fearful risk in so doing. But if you will not do it now, while you are in health, I will leave it with you to remember, when you shall come to lie on your death-beds. Doubtless, then, if you have the use of your reason, you will be concerned for the salvation of your poor souls. And let this be one thing then remembered, as absolutely necessary in order to your salvation, that before you die, you must make restitution for whatever wrong you shall have done any of your neighbors; or at least leave orders that such restitution be made; otherwise you will, as it were, go out of the world, and go before your Great Judge, with stolen goods in your hands. And certainly it will not be very comfortable or safe, to bring them into his infinitely holy and dreadful presence, when he sits on his throne of judgment, with his eyes as a flame of fire, being more pure than to look on iniquity; when he is about to sentence you to your everlasting unalterable state.

Every one here present, who has been guilty of wronging his neighbor, and has not yet made restitution, must die. Let all such therefore remember this counsel now given them, on the day when death shall approach, if they shall be so foolish as to neglect it till that time.

SERMON XXXIX.

THE PERPETUITY AND CHANGE OF THE SABBATH

1 Corinthians xvi. 1, 2.—Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

We find in the New Testament often mentioned a certain collection, which was made by the Grecian churches, for the brethren in Judea, who were reduced to pinching want by a dearth which then prevailed, and was the heavier upon them by reason of their circumstances, they having been from the beginning oppressed and persecuted by the unbelieving Jews.—We have this collection or contribution twice mentioned in the Acts, as in chapter xi. 28—31, and in chapter xxiv. 17. It is also taken notice of in several of the epistles; as Rom. xv. 26, and Gal. ii. 10. But it is most largely insisted on, in these two epistles to the Corinthians; in this first epistle, chapter xvi., and in the second epistle, chapters viii. and ix. The apostle begins the directions, which in this place he delivers concerning this matter, with the words of the text—wherein we may observe,

1. What is the thing to be done concerning which the apostle gives them direction, and that is, the making of a collection for the saints; the exercise and manifestation of their charity towards their brethren, by communicating to them, for the supply of their wants; which was by Christ and his apostles often spoken of and insisted on, as one main duty of the Christian religion, and is expressly declared to be so by the Apostle James, chap. i. 27: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction."

2. We may observe the time on which the apostle directs that this should be done, viz., "on the first day of the week." By the inspiration of the Holy Ghost he insists upon it, that it be done on such a particular day of the week, as if no other day would do so well as that, or were so proper and fit a time for such a work. Thus, although the inspired apostle was not for making that distinction of days in gospel times, which the Jews made, as appears by Gal iv. 10, "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain;" yet here he gives the preference to one day of the week, before any other, for the performance of a certain great duty of Christianity

3. It may be observed, that this is the direction which the apostle had given to other churches that were concerned in the same duty, upon this occasion: he had given direction to them also to do it on the first day of the week: "As I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye." Whence we may learn, that it was nothing peculiar in the circumstances of the Christians at Corinth, which was the reason why the Holy Ghost insisted that they should perform this duty on this day of the week. The apostle had given the like orders to the churches of Galatia.

Now Galatia was far distant from Corinth; the sea parted them; and besides that, there were several other countries between them. Therefore it cannot be thought that the Holy Ghost directs them to this time upon any secular account, having respect to some particular circumstances of the people in that city, but upon a religious account. In giving the preference to this day for

such work, before any other day, he has respect to something which reached all Christians throughout the wide world.

And by other passages of the New Testament, we learn that the case was the same as to other exercises of religion; and that in the age of the apostles, the first day of the week was preferred before any other day, among the primitive Christians, and in churches immediately under the care of the apostles, for an attendance on the exercises of religion in general: Acts xx. 7, "Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them." It seems by these things to have been among the primitive Christians in the apostles' days, with respect to the first day of the week, as it was among the Jews with respect to the seventh.

We are taught by Christ, that the doing of alms and showing of mercy are proper works for the Sabbath day. When the Pharisees found fault with Christ for suffering his disciples to pluck the ears of corn and eat on the Sabbath, Christ corrects them with that, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice," Matt. xii. 7. And Christ teaches that works of mercy are proper to be done on the Sabbath, in Luke xiii. 15, 16, and xiv. 5. These works used to be done on sacred festivals and days of rejoicing, under the Old Testament, as in Nehemiah's and Esther's time; Neh. viii. 10, and Esther ix. 19—22. And *Josephus* and *Philo*, two very noted Jews, who wrote not long after Christ's time, give an account that it was the manner among the Jews on the Sabbath, to make collections for sacred and pious uses.

DOCTRINE.

It is the mind and will of God, that the first day of the week should be especially set apart among Christians, for religious exercises and duties.

That this is the doctrine which the Holy Ghost intended to teach us, by this and some other passages of the New Testament, I hope will appear plainly by the sequel. This is a doctrine that we have been generally brought up in by the instructions and examples of our ancestors; and it is and has been the general profession of the Christian world, that this day ought to be religiously observed, and distinguished from other days of the week. However, some deny it. Some refuse to take any notice of the day, or any way to difference it from other days. Others own, that it is a laudable custom of the Christian church, into which she fell by agreement, and by appointment of her ordinary rulers, to set apart this day for public worship. But they deny any other original to such an observation of the day, than prudential human appointment. Others religiously observe the Jewish Sabbath, suppose that the institution of that is of perpetual obligation, and that we want foundation for determining that that is abrogated, and another day of the week is appointed in the room of the seventh.

All those classes of men say, that there is no clear revelation that it is the mind and will of God, that the first day of the week should be observed as a day to be set apart for religious exercises, in the room of the ancient Sabbath; which there ought to be in order to the observation of it by the Christian church as a divine institution. They say, that we ought not to go upon the tradition of past ages, or upon uncertain and far-fetched inferences from some passages of the history of the New Testament, or upon some obscure and uncertain hints in the apostles' writings; but that we ought to expect a plain institution; which, they say, we may conclude God would have given us, if he had designed that the whole Christian church, in all ages, should observe another day of the week for a holy Sabbath, than that which was appointed of old by plain and positive institution.

So far is undoubtedly true, that if this be the mind and will of God, he hath not left the matter to human tradition; but hath so revealed his mind about it, in his word, that there is there to be found good and substantial evidence that it is his mind: and doubtless, the revelation is plain enough for them that have ears to hear; that is, for them that will justly exercise their understandings about what God says to them. No Christian, therefore, should rest till he has satisfactorily discovered the mind of God in this matter. If the Christian Sabbath be of divine institution, it is doubtless of great importance to religion that it be well kept; and therefore, that every Christian be well acquainted with the institution.

If men only take it upon trust, and keep the first day of the week only because their parents taught them so, or because they see others do so, and so they take it for certain that it is right; they will never be likely to keep it so conscientiously and strictly, as if they had seen with their own eyes, and had been convinced by seeing for themselves, good grounds in the word of God for their practice: and unless they do see thus for themselves, whenever they are negligent in sanctifying the Sabbath, or are guilty of profaning it; their consciences will not have that advantage to smite them for it, as otherwise they would. And those who have a sincere desire to obey God in all things, will keep the Sabbath more carefully and more cheerfully, if they have seen and been convinced that therein they do what is according to the will and command of God, and what is acceptable to him; and will also have a great deal more comfort in the reflection upon their having carefully and painfully kept the Sabbath.

Therefore, I design now, by the help of God, to show, that it is sufficiently revealed in the Scriptures, to be the mind and will of God, that the first day of the week should be distinguished in the Christian church from other days of the week, as a Sabbath, to be devoted to religious exercises.

In order to this, I shall here premise, that the mind and will of God, concerning any duty to be performed by us, may be sufficiently revealed in his word, without a particular precept in so many express terms, enjoining it. The human understanding is the ear to which the word of God is spoken; and if it be so spoken, that that ear may plainly hear it, it is enough. God is sovereign as to the manner of speaking his mind, whether he will speak it in express terms, or whether he will speak it by saying several other things which imply it, and from which we may, by comparing them together, plainly perceive it. If the mind of God be but revealed, if there be but sufficient means for the communication of his mind to our minds, that is sufficient; whether we hear so many express words with our ears, or see them in writing with our eyes; or whether we see the thing that he would signify to us, by the eye of reason and understanding.

Who can positively say, that if it had been the mind of God, that we should keep the first day of the week, he would have commanded it in express terms, as he did the observation of the seventh day of old? Indeed, if God had so made our faculties, that we were not capable of receiving a revelation of his mind in any other way; then there would have been some reason to say so. But God hath given us such understandings, that we are capable of receiving a revelation, when made in another manner. And if God deals with us agreeably to our natures, and in a way suitable to our capacities, it is enough. If God discovers his mind in any way whatsoever, provided it be according to our faculties, we are obliged to obedience; and God may expect our notice and observance of his revelation, in the same manner as if he had revealed it in express terms.

I shall speak upon this subject under these two general propositions:

1. It is sufficiently clear, that it is the mind of God, that one day of the week should be devoted to rest, and to religious exercises, throughout all ages and nations.

2. It is sufficiently clear, that under the gospel dispensation, this day is the first day of the week.

I. PROPOSITION. It is sufficiently clear, that it is the mind of God, that one day of the week should be devoted to rest, and to religious exercises, throughout all ages and nations; and not only among the ancient Israelites till Christ came, but even in these gospel times, and among all nations professing Christianity.

1. From the consideration of the nature and state of mankind in this world, it is most consonant to human reason, that certain fixed parts of time should be set apart, to be spent by the church wholly in religious exercises, and in the duties of divine worship. It is a duty incumbent on all mankind, in all ages alike, to worship and serve God. His service should be our great business. It becomes us to worship him with the greatest devotion and engagedness of mind; and therefore to put ourselves, at proper times, in such circumstances, as will most contribute to render our minds entirely devoted to this work, without being diverted or interrupted by other things.

The state of mankind in this world is such, that we are called to concern ourselves in secular business and affairs, which will necessarily, in a considerable degree, take up the thoughts and engage the attention of the mind. However some particular persons may be in such circumstances as to be more free and disengaged; yet the state of mankind is such, that the bulk of them, in all ages and nations, are called ordinarily to exercise their thoughts about secular affairs, and to follow worldly business, which, in its own nature, is remote from the solemn duties of religion.

It is therefore most meet and suitable, that certain times should be set apart upon which men should be required to throw by all other concerns, that their minds many be the more freely and entirely engaged in spiritual exercises, in the duties of religion, and in the immediate worship of God; and that their minds being disengaged from common concerns, their religion may not be mixed with them.

It is also suitable that these times should be fixed and settled, that the church may agree therein, and that they should be the same for all, that men may not interrupt one another; but may rather assist one another by mutual example: for example has a great influence in such cases. If there be a time set apart for public rejoicing, and there be a general manifestation of joy, the general example seems to inspire men with a spirit of joy and mirth; one kindles another. So, if it be a time of mourning, and there be general appearances and manifestations of sorrow, it naturally affects the mind, it disposes it to depression, it casts a gloom upon it, and does as it were dull and deaden the spirits.—So, if a certain time be set apart as holy time, for general devotion, and solemn religious exercises, a general example tends to render the spirit serious and solemn.

2. Without doubt, one proportion of time is better and fitter than another for this purpose. One proportion is more suitable to the state of mankind, and will have a greater tendency to answer the ends of such times, than another The times may be too far asunder; I think human reason is sufficient to discover, that it would be too seldom for the purposes of such solemn times, that they should be but once a year. So, I conclude, nobody will deny, but that

such times may be too near together to agree with the state and necessary affairs of mankind.

Therefore, there can be no difficulty in allowing, that some certain proportion of time, whether we can exactly discover it or not, is really fittest and best; and considering all things, considering the end for which such times are kept, and the condition, circumstances, and necessary affairs of men, and considering what the state of man is, taking one age and nation with another, that one proportion of time is more convenient and suitable than any other; which God may know and exactly determine, though we, by reason of the scantiness of our understandings, cannot.

As a certain frequency of the returns of these times may be more suitable than any other, so one length or continuance of the times themselves may be fitter than another, to answer the purposes of such times. If such times, when they come, were to last but an hour, it would not well answer the end; for then worldly things would crowd too nearly upon sacred exercises, and there would not be that opportunity to get the mind so thoroughly free and disengaged from other things, as there would be, if the times were longer. But they being so short, sacred and profane things would be as it were mixed together. Therefore, a certain distance between these times, and a certain continuance of them when they come, is more proper than others; which God knows and is able to determine, though perhaps we cannot.

3. It is unreasonable to suppose any other, than that God's working six days, and resting the seventh, and blessing and hallowing it, was to be of general use in determining this matter, and that it is written, that the practice of mankind in general might some way or other be regulated by it. What could be the meaning of God's resting the seventh day, and hallowing and blessing it, which he did, before the giving of the fourth commandment, unless he hallowed and blessed it with respect to mankind? For he did not bless and sanctify it with respect to himself, or that he himself and within himself might observe it; as that is most absurd. And it is unreasonable to suppose that he hallowed it only with respect to the Jews, a particular nation, which rose up above two thousand years after.

So much therefore must be intended by it, that it was his mind, that mankind should, after his example, work six days, and then rest, and hallow or sanctify the next following; and that they should sanctify every seventh day, or that the space between rest and rest, one hallowed time and another, among his creatures here upon earth, should be six days. So that it hence appears to be the mind and will of God, that not only the Jews, but men in all nations and ages, should sanctify one day in seven; which is the thing we are endeavoring to prove.

4. The mind of God in this matter is clearly revealed in the fourth commandment. The will of God is there revealed, not only that the Israelitish nation, but that all nations, should keep every seventh day holy; or, which is the same thing, one day after every six. This command, as well as the rest, is doubtless everlasting and of perpetual obligation, at least, as to the substance of it, as is intimated by its being engraven on the tables of stone. Nor is it to be thought that Christ ever abolished any command of the ten; but that there is the complete number TEN yet, and will be to the end of the world.

Some say, that the fourth commandment is perpetual, but not in its literal sense, not as designing any particular proportion of time to be set apart and devoted to literal rest and religious exercises. They say, that it is abolished in that sense, and stands in force only in a mystical sense, viz., as that weekly rest

of the Jews typified spiritual rest in the Christian church. And so, they say, that we under the gospel, are not to make any distinction of one day from another, but are to keep all time holy, doing every thing in a spiritual manner.

But this is an absurd way of interpreting the command, as it refers to Christians. For if the command be so far abolished, it is entirely abolished. For it is the very design of the command, to fix the time of worship. The first command fixes the object, the second the means, the third the manner, the fourth the time. And, if it stands in force now only as signifying a spiritual, Christian rest, and holy behavior at all times, it doth not remain as one of the ten commandments, but as a summary of all the commands.

The main objection against the perpetuity of this command is, that the duty required is not MORAL. Those laws whose obligation arises from the nature of things, and from the general state and nature of mankind, as well as from God's positive revealed will, are called MORAL laws. Others, whose obligation depends merely upon God's positive and arbitrary institution, are not moral; such as the ceremonial laws, and the precepts of the gospel, about the two sacraments. Now, the objectors say, they will allow all that is moral in the decalogue to be of perpetual obligation; but this command, they say, is not moral.

But this objection is weak and insufficient for the purpose for which it is brought, or to prove that the fourth command, as to the substance of it, is not of perpetual obligation. For,

(1.) If it should be allowed that there is no morality belonging to the command, and that the duty required is founded merely on arbitrary institution, it cannot therefore be certainly concluded that the command is not perpetual. We know that there may be commands in force under the gospel, and to the end of the world, which are not moral: such are the institutions of the two sacraments. And why may there not be positive commands in force in all ages of the church? If positive, arbitrary institutions are in force in gospel times, what is there which concludes that no positive precept given before the times of the gospel can yet continue in force? But,

(2.) As we have observed already, the thing in general, that there should be certain fixed parts of time set apart to be devoted to religious exercises, is founded in the fitness of the thing, arising from the nature of things, and the nature and universal state of mankind. Therefore, there is as much reason that there should be a command of perpetual and universal obligation about this, as about any other duty whatsoever. For if the thing in general, that there be a time fixed, be founded in the nature of things, there is consequent upon it a necessity, that the time be limited by a command; for there must be a proportion of time fixed, or else the general moral duty cannot be observed.

(3.) The particular determination of the proportion of time in the fourth commandment, is also founded in the nature of things, only our understandings are not sufficient absolutely to determine it of themselves. We have observed already, that without doubt one proportion of time is in itself fitter than another, and a certain continuance of time fitter than any other, considering the universal state and nature of mankind; which God may see, though our understandings are not perfect enough absolutely to determine it. So that the difference between this command and others, doth not lie in this, that other commands are founded in the fitness of the things themselves, arising from the universal state and nature of mankind, and this not: but only in this, that the fitness of other commands is more obvious to the understandings of men, and they might have seen it of themselves; but this could not be precisely discovered and positively determined without the assistance of revelation.

So that the command of God, that every seventh day should be devoted to religious exercises, is founded in the universal state and nature of mankind, as well as other commands; only man's reason is not sufficient, without divine direction, so exactly to determine it: though perhaps man's reason is sufficient to determine, that it ought not to be much seldomer, nor much oftener than once in seven days.

5. It further confirms it, that it is the mind and will of God, that such a weekly Sabbath should forever be kept, that God appears in his word as laying abundantly more weight on this precept concerning the Sabbath, than on any precept of the ceremonial law; not only by inserting it in the decalogue, and making it one of the ten commands, which were delivered by God with an audible voice, by writing it with his own finger on the tables of stone, which were the work of God in the mount, and by appointing it afterwards to be written on the tables which Moses made; but as the keeping of the weekly Sabbath is spoken of by the prophets, as that wherein consists a great part of holiness of life; and as it is inserted among moral duties, as particularly in Isaiah lviii. 13, 14: "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable, and shalt honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

6. It is foretold, that this command should be observed in gospel times; as in Isaiah lvi., at the beginning, where the due observation of the Sabbath is spoken of as a great part of holiness of life, and is placed among moral duties. It is also mentioned as a duty that should be most acceptable to God from his people, even where the prophet is speaking of gospel times; as in the foregoing chapter, and in the first verse of this chapter. And, in the 3d and 4th verses, the prophet is speaking of the abolition of the ceremonial law in gospel times, and particularly of that law, which forbids eunuchs to come into the congregation of the Lord. Yet, here the man is pronounced *blessed, who keeps the Sabbath from polluting it*, verse 2. And even in the very sentence where the eunuchs are spoken of as being free from the ceremonial law, they are spoken of as being yet under obligation to keep the Sabbath, and their keeping of it, as that which God lays great weight upon: "For, thus saith the Lord, unto the eunuchs that keep my Sabbath, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant: even unto them will I give in mine house, and within my walls, a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off."

Besides, the strangers spoken of in the 6th and 7th verses, are the Gentiles, that should be called in the times of the gospel, as is evident by the last clause in the 7th, and by the 8th verse: "For mine house shall be called a house of prayer *for all people*. The Lord God, which gathereth the outcasts of Israel, saith, Yet will I gather *others* to him, *besides those that are gathered unto him.*" Yet it is represented here as their duty to keep the Sabbath: "Also the *sons of the stranger*, that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants, *every one that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it*, and taketh hold of my covenant: even *them will I bring* to my holy mountain, and *make them joyful in my house of prayer.*"

7. A further argument for the perpetuity of the Sabbath, we have in Matt. xxiv. 20: "Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, *neither on the Sab-*

bath day." Christ is here speaking of the flight of the apostles and other Christians out of Jerusalem and Judea, just before their final destruction, as is manifest by the whole context, and especially by the 16th verse: "Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains." But this final destruction of Jerusalem was after the dissolution of the Jewish constitution, and after the Christian dispensation was fully set up. Yet, it is plainly implied in these words of our Lord, that even then Christians were bound to a strict observation of the Sabbath.

Thus I have shown, that it is the will of God, that every seventh day be devoted to rest and to religious exercises.

I proceed now to the

II. PROPOSITION. That it is the will of God, that under the gospel dispensation, or in the Christian church, this day should be the FIRST day of the week.

In order to the confirmation of this, let the following things be considered:

1. The words of the fourth commandment afford no objection against this being the day that should be the Sabbath, any more than against any other day. That this day, which, according to the Jewish reckoning, is the first of the week, should be kept as a Sabbath, is no more opposite to any sentence or word of the fourth command, than that the seventh of the week should be the day; and that because the words of the fourth command do not determine which day of the week we should keep as a Sabbath; they merely determine this, that we should rest and keep as a Sabbath every seventh day, or one day after every six. It says, SIX DAYS THOU SHALT LABOR, AND THE SEVENTH THOU SHALT REST; which implies no more, than that after six days of labor, we shall, upon the next to the sixth, rest and keep it holy. And so, to be sure, we are obliged to do forever. But the words no way determine where those six days shall begin, and so where the rest or Sabbath shall fall. There is no direction in the fourth command how to reckon the time, i. e., where to begin and end it. That is not meddled with in the fourth command, but is supposed to be determined otherwise.

The Jews did not know, by the fourth command, where to begin their six days, and on which particular day to rest; this was determined by another precept. The fourth command does indeed suppose a particular day appointed; but it does not appoint any. It requires us to rest and keep holy a seventh day, one after every six of labor, which particular day God either had or should appoint. The particular day was determined for that nation in another place, viz., in Exod. xvi. 23, 25, 26: "And he said unto them, This is that which the Lord hath said, TO-MORROW is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord: bake that which ye will bake to-day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over, lay up for you to be kept until the morning.—And Moses said Eat that to-day, for TO-DAY IS A SABBATH UNTO THE LORD: to-day ye shall not find it in the field. Six days ye shall gather it; but on the SEVENTH DAY, WHICH IS THE SABBATH, in it there shall be none." This is the first place where we have any mention made of the Sabbath, from the first Sabbath on which God rested.

It seems that the Israelites, in the time of their bondage in Egypt, had lost the true reckoning of time by the days of the week, reckoning from the first day of the creation, if it had been kept up till that time. They were slaves, and in cruel bondage, and had, in a great measure, forgotten the true religion: for we are told, that they served the gods of Egypt. And it is not to be supposed, that the Egyptians would suffer their slaves to rest from their work every seventh day. Now, they having remained in bondage for so long a time, had probably

lost the weekly reckoning; therefore, when God had brought them out of Egypt into the wilderness, he made known to them the Sabbath, on the occasion, and in the manner recorded in the text just now quoted. Hence we read in Nehemiah, that when God had led the children of Israel out of Egypt, &c., he made known unto them his holy Sabbath: Neh. ix. 14, "And madest known unto them thy holy Sabbath." To the same effect, we read in Ezek. xx. 10, 12, "Wherefore I caused them to go forth out of the land of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness. Moreover also, I gave them my Sabbaths."

But they never would have known where the particular day would have fallen by the fourth command. Indeed, the fourth command, as it was spoken to the Jews, did refer to their Jewish Sabbath. But that doth not prove, that that day was determined and appointed by it. The precept in the fourth command is to be taken generally of a seventh day, such a seventh day as God should appoint, or had appointed And because such a particular day had been already appointed for the Jewish church; therefore, as it was spoken to them, it did refer to that particular day. But this doth not prove, but that the same words refer to another appointed seventh day, now in the Christian church. The words of the fourth command may oblige the church, under different dispensations, to observe different appointed seventh days, as well as the fifth command may oblige different persons to honor different fathers and mothers.

The Christian Sabbath, in the sense of the fourth command, is as much the seventh day, as the Jewish Sabbath; because it is kept every seventh day as much as that; it is kept after six days of labor as well as that; it is the seventh, reckoning from the beginning of our first working day, as well as that was the seventh from the beginning of their first working day. All the difference is, that the seven days formerly began from the day after God's rest from the creation, and now they begin the day after that. It is no matter by what names the days are called: if our nation had, for instance, called Wednesday the first of the week, it would have been all one as to this argument.

Therefore, by the institution of the Christian Sabbath, there is no change from the fourth command; but the change is from another law, which determined the beginning and ending of their working days. So that those words of the fourth command, viz., "Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God;" afford no objection against that which is called the Christian Sabbath; for these words remain in full force still. Neither does any just objection arise from these words following, viz., "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: Wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it." These words are not made insignificant to Christians, by the institution of the Christian Sabbath; they still remain in their full force as to that which is principally intended by them. They were designed to give us a reason why we are to work but six days at a time, and then rest on the seventh, because God hath set us the example. And taken so, they remain still in as much force as ever they were. This is the reason still, as much as ever it was, why we may work but six days at a time. What is the reason that Christians rest every seventh, and not every eighth, or every ninth, or tenth day? It is because God worked six days and rested the seventh.

It is true, these words did carry something further in their meaning, as they were spoken to the Jews, and to the church, before the coming of Christ: it was then also intended by them, that the seventh day was to be kept in commemoration of the work of creation. But this is no objection to the supposition,

that the words, as they relate to us, do not import all that they did, as they related to the Jews. For there are other words which were written upon those tables of stone with the ten commandments, which are known and allowed not to be of the same import, as they relate to us, which they were of, as they related to the Jews, viz., these words, in the preface to the ten commands, "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."—These words were written on the tables of stone with the rest, and these words are spoken to us, as well as to the Jews: they are spoken to all to whom the commandments themselves are spoken; for they are spoken as an enforcement of the commandments. But they do not now remain in all the signification which they had, as they respected the Jews. For we never were brought out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, except in a mystical sense. The same may be said of those words which are inserted in the commandments themselves, Deut. v 15: "And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence, through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day."

So all the arguments of those who are against the Christian Sabbath, drawn from the fourth command, which are all their strength, come to nothing.

2. That the ancient church was commanded to keep a seventh day in commemoration of the work of creation, is an argument for the keeping of a weekly Sabbath in commemoration of the work of redemption, and not any reason against it.

We read in Scripture of two creations, the old and the new: and these words of the fourth command are to be taken as of the same force to those who belong to the new creation, with respect to the new creation, as they were to those who belonged to the old creation, with respect to the old creation. We read, that "in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," and the church of old were to commemorate that work But when God creates a new heaven and a new earth, those that belong to this new heaven and new earth, by a like reason, are to commemorate the creation of their heaven and earth.

The Scriptures teach us to look upon the old creation as destroyed, and as it were annihilated by sin; or, as being reduced to a chaos again, without form and void, as it was at first: Jer. iv. 22, 23, "They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge. I beheld the earth, and lo, it was without form and void; and the heavens, and they had no light;" i. e., they were reduced to the same state in which they were at first; the earth was without form and void, and there was no light, but darkness was upon the face of the deep.

The Scriptures further teach us to call the gospel restoration and redemption, a creation of a new heaven and a new earth: Isai. lxv. 17, 18, "For behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice forever in that which I create: for behold, I create *Jerusalem* a rejoicing, and *her people* a joy." And Isai. li. 16, "And I have put my words in thy mouth, and have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, *Thou* art my people." And chap. lxvi. 22, "For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make," &c.—In these places, we are not only told of a new creation, or new heavens and a new earth, but we are told what is meant by it, viz., the gospel renovation, the making of Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy; saying unto Zion, "Thou art my people," &c. The prophet, in all these places, is prophesying of the gospel redemption.

The gospel state is everywhere spoken of as a renewed state of things, *wherein old things are passed away*, and *all things become new:* we are said to be *created in Christ Jesus unto good works: all things are restored and reconciled whether in heaven or in earth*; and God hath *caused light to shine out of darkness*, as he did at the beginning; and the dissolution of the Jewish state was often spoken of in the Old Testament as the end of the world. But we who belong to the gospel church belong to the new creation; and therefore there seems to be at least as much reason, that we should commemorate the work of this creation, as that the members of the ancient Jewish church should commemorate the work of the old creation.

3. There is another thing which confirms it, that the fourth command reaches God's resting from the new creation, as well as from the old; which is, that the Scriptures do expressly speak of the one, as parallel with the other, i. e., Christ's resting from the work of redemption, is expressly spoken of as being parallel with God's resting from the work of creation, as in Heb. iv. 10: "For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his."

Now, Christ rested from his works when he rose from the dead, on the first day of the week. When he rose from the dead, then he finished his work of redemption; his humiliation was then at an end; he then rested and was refreshed. When it is said in this place, "There remaineth a rest to the people of God:" in the original, it is, a *Sabbatism, or the keeping of a Sabbath:* and this reason is given for it, "For he that entereth into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his." These three things at least we are taught by these words:

(1.) We are taught by them to look upon Christ's rest from his work of redemption, as parallel with God's rest from the work of creation; for they are expressly compared together, as parallel one with the other.

(2.) They are spoken of as parallel, particularly in this respect, viz. ,the relation which they both have to the keeping of a Sabbath among God's people, or with respect to the influence which these two rests have, as to *Sabbatizing* in the church of God: for it is expressly with respect to this that they are compared together. Here is an evident reference to God's blessing and hallowing the day of his rest from the creation to be a Sabbath, and appointing a Sabbath of rest in imitation of him. For the apostle is speaking of this, verse 4: "For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works." Thus far is evident; whatever the apostle has respect to by his keeping of a Sabbath by the people of God, whether it be a weekly Sabbatizing on earth, or a Sabbatizing in heaven.

(3.) It is evident in these words, that the preference is given to the latter rest, viz., the rest of our Saviour from his works, with respect to the influence it should have, or relation it bears to the Sabbatizing of the people of God, now under the gospel, evidently implied in the expression, "There remaineth therefore a Sabbatism to the people of God. For he that entereth into his rest," &c. For, in this expression, *there remaineth*, it is intimated, that the old Sabbatism appointed in remembrance of God's rest from the work of creation, doth not remain, but ceases; and that this new rest, in commemoration of Christ's resting from his works, remains in the room of it.

4. The Holy Ghost hath implicitly told us, that the Sabbath which was instituted in commemoration of the old creation, should not be kept in gospel times, in Isai. lxv. 17, 18. There we are told that when God should create new heavens and a new earth, the former should not be remembered, nor come

into mind. If this be so, it is not to be supposed, that we are to keep a seventh part of time, on purpose to remember it, and call it to mind.

Let us understand this which way we will, it will not be well consistent with the keeping of one day in seven, in the gospel church, principally for the remembrance and calling to mind of the old creation. If the meaning of the place be only this, that the old creation shall not be remembered, nor come into mind in comparison with the new, and that the new will be so much more remarkable and glorious, and will so much more nearly concern us, that so much more notice will be taken of it, and it will be thought so much more worthy to be remembered and commemorated, that the other will be forgotten, will not be remembered, nor come into mind: if we understand it thus, it is impossible that it should be more to our purpose. For then, hereby the Holy Ghost teaches us, that the Christian church has much more reason to commemorate the new creation than the old; insomuch that the old is worthy to be forgotten in comparison with it.

And as the old creation was no more to be remembered, nor come into mind; so, in the following verse, the church is directed forever to commemorate the new creation: "But be ye glad, and rejoice forever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy;" i. e., though you forget the old, yet forever, to the end of the world, keep a remembrance of the new creation.

It is an argument, that the Jewish Sabbath was not to be perpetual, that the Jews were commanded to keep it in remembrance of their deliverance out of Egypt. One reason why it was instituted was, because God thus delivered them, as we are expressly told in the decalogue itself, in one of the places where we have it recorded in the books of Moses: Deut. v. 15, "And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence, through a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day." Now, can any person think, that God would have all nations under the gospel, and to th end of the world, keep a day every week, which was instituted in remembrance of the deliverance of the Jews out of Egypt?

6. The Holy Ghost hath implicitly told us, that instituted memorials of the Jews' deliverance from Egypt should be no longer upheld in gospel times, as in Jer. xvi. 14, 15. The Holy Ghost, speaking there of the gospel times, says, "Therefore, behold the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be said, The Lord liveth that brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt; but the Lord liveth that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them; and I will bring them again into their own land." *They shall no more say, The Lord liveth that brought*, &c., i. e., at least they shall keep up no more any public memorials of it.

If there be a Sabbath kept up in gospel times, as we have shown there must be, it is more just from these words to suppose, that it should be a memorial of that which is spoken of in the latter verse, *the bringing up of the children of Israel from the land of the north;* that is, the redemption of Christ, and his bringing home the elect, not only from Judea, but from the north, and from all quarters of the world. See Isai. xliii. 16—20.

7. It is no more than just to suppose, that God intended to intimate to us, that the Sabbath ought by Christians to be kept in commemoration of Christ's redemption, in that the Israelites were commanded to keep it in remembrance of their deliverance out of Egypt: because that deliverance out of Egypt is an evident, known, and allowed type of it. It was contrived and ordered of God,

on purpose to represent it; every thing about that deliverance was typical of this redemption, and much is made of it, principally for this reason, because it is so remarkable a type of Christ's redemption. And it was but a shadow, the work in itself was nothing in comparison with the work of redemption. What is a petty redemption of one nation from a temporal bondage, to the eternal salvation of the whole church of the elect, in all ages and nations, from eternal damnation, and the introduction of them, not into a temporal Canaan, but into heaven, into eternal glory and blessedness? Was that shadow so much to be commemorated, as that a day once a week was to be kept on the account of it; and shall not we much more commemorate that great and glorious work of which it was designed on purpose to be a shadow?

Besides, the words in the fourth commandment, which speak of the deliverance out of Egypt, can be of no significancy unto us, unless they are to be interpreted of the gospel redemption: but the words of the decalogue are spoken to all nations and ages. Therefore, as the words were spoken to the Jews, they referred to the type or shadow; as they are spoken to us, they are to be interpreted of the antitype and substance. For the Egypt from which we under the gospel are redeemed, is the spiritual Egypt; the house of bondage, from which we are redeemed, is a state of spiritual bondage. Therefore the words, as spoken to us, are to be thus interpreted: Remember, thou wast a servant to sin and Satan, and the Lord thy God delivered thee from this bondage, with a mighty hand and outstretched arm; therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day.

As the words in the preface to the ten commandments, about the bringing of the children of Israel out of Egypt, are interpreted in our catechism, and as they have respect to us, must be interpreted of our spiritual redemption, so, by an exact identity of reason, must these words in Deuteronomy, annexed to the fourth command, be interpreted of the same gospel redemption.

The Jewish Sabbath was kept on the day that the children of Israel came up out of the Red Sea. For we are told in Deut. v. 15, that this holy rest of the Sabbath was appointed in commemoration of their coming up out of Egypt. But the day of their going through the Red Sea was the day of their coming up out of Egypt; for till then they were in the land of Egypt. The Red Sea was the boundary of the land of Egypt.—The Scripture itself tells us, that that day on which they sung the song of Moses, was the day of their coming up out of the land of Egypt. Hos. ii. 15, "And she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt;" referring plainly to that triumphant song which Moses and the children of Israel sang when they came up out of the Red Sea.

The Scripture tells us, that God appointed the Jewish Sabbath in commemoration of the deliverance of the children of Israel from their task-masters, the Egyptians, and of their rest from their hard bondage and slavery under them. Deut. v. 14, 15, "That thy man-servant and thy maid-servant may rest as well as thou. And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence, through a mighty hand, and by an outstretched arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day." But the day that the children of Israel were delivered from their task-masters and had rest from them, was the day when the children of Israel came up out of the Red Sea. They had no rest from them till then. For though they were before come forth on their journey to go out of the land of Egypt; yet they were pursued by the Egyptians, and were exceedingly perplexed and distressed. But on the morning that they came up out of the Red

Sea, they had complete and final deliverance; then they had full rest from their task-masters. Then God said to them, "The Egyptians which ye have seen this day, ye shall see no more forever;" Exod. xiv. 13. Then they enjoyed a joyful day of rest, a day of refreshment. Then they sang the song of Moses; and on that day was their Sabbath of rest.

But this coming up of the children of Israel out of the Red Sea, was only a type of the resurrection of Christ. That people was the mystical body of Christ, and Moses was a great type of Christ himself; and besides, on that day Christ went before the children of Israel in the pillar of cloud and of fire, as their Saviour and Redeemer. On that morning Christ, in this pillar of cloud and fire, rose out of the Red Sea, as out of great waters; which was a type of Christ's rising from a state of death, and from that great humiliation which he suffered in death.

The resurrection of Christ from the dead, is in Scripture represented by his coming up out of deep waters. So it is in Christ's resurrection, as represented by Jonah's coming out of the sea, Matt. xii. 40. It is also compared to a deliverance out of deep waters in Psal. lxix. 1, 2, 3, and ver 14, 15. These things are spoken of Christ, as is evident from this, that many things in this Psalm are in the New Testament expressly applied to Christ, as you may see by comparing ver. 4 with John xv. 25, and ver. 9, with John ii. 17, and ver. 2, with Matt. xxvii 34, 48, and Mark xv. 23, and John xix. 29, and ver. 22, with Rom. xi. 9, 10 and ver. 25, with Acts i. 20.

Therefore it being so, that the Jewish Sabbath was appointed on the day on which the pillar of cloud and fire rose out of the Red Sea, and on which Moses and the church, the mystical body of Christ, came up out of the same sea, which is a type of the resurrection of Christ; it is a great confirmation that the Christian Sabbath should be kept on the day of the rising of the real body of Christ from the grave, which is the antitype. For surely the Scriptures have taught us, that the type should give way to the antitype, and that the shadow should give way to the substance.

8. I argue the same thing from Psalm cxviii. 22, 23, 24. There we are taught, that the day of Christ's resurrection is to be celebrated with holy joy by the church. "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing, it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it." The stone spoken of is Christ; he was refused and rejected by the builders, especially when he was put to death. That making of him the head of the corner spoken of, which is the Lord's doing, and so marvellous in our eyes, is Christ's exaltation, which began with his resurrection. While Christ lay in the grave, he lay as a stone cast away by the builders. But when God raised him from the dead, then he became the head of the corner. Thus it is evident the apostle interprets it, Acts iv. 10, 11: "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead," &c.—"This is the stone which was set at nought by you builders, which is become the head of the corner."

And the day on which this was done, we are here taught, that God hath made to be the day of the rejoicing of the church.

9. The abolition of the Jewish Sabbath seems to be intimated by this, that Christ, the Lord of the Sabbath, lay buried on that day. Christ, the author of the world, was the author of that work of creation, of which the Jewish Sabbath was the memorial. It was he that worked six days and rested the seventh day from all his works, and was refreshed. Yet he was holden in the chains of

death on that day. God, who created the world, now in his second work of creation, did not follow his own example, if I may so speak; he did not rest on the same day, but remained imprisoned in the grave on that day, and took another day to rest in.

The Sabbath was a day of rejoicing; for it was kept in commemoration of God's glorious and gracious works of creation, and the redemption out of Egypt. Therefore we are directed to call the Sabbath a delight. But it is not a proper day for the church, Christ's spouse, to rejoice, when Christ the bridegroom lies buried in the grave, as Christ says, Matt. ix. 15, "That the children of the bridechamber cannot mourn, while the bridegroom is with them. But the time will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them; then shall they mourn." While Christ was holden under the chains of death; then the bridegroom was taken from them; then it was a proper time for the spouse to mourn and not rejoice. But when Christ rose again, then it was a day of joy, because we are begotten again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

10. Christ hath evidently, on purpose and design, peculiarly honored the first day of the week, the day on which he rose from the dead, by taking this day of the week, from time to time, to appear to the apostles, and by taking this day to pour out the Holy Ghost on the apostles, which we read of in the second chapter of Acts: for this was on the first day of the week, being on Pentecost, which was on the first day of the week, as you may see by Levit. xxiii. 15, 16. And by pouring out his Spirit on the Apostle John, and giving him his visions on this day. Rev. i. 10, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day," &c.

Now doubtless Christ had his meaning in thus distinguishingly honoring this day.

11. It is evident by the New Testament, that this was especially the day of the public worship of the primitive church, by the direction of the apostles. We are told that this was the day that they were wont to come together to break bread; and this they evidently did with the approbation of the apostles, inasmuch as they preached to them on that day; and therefore, doubtless, they assembled together by the direction of the apostles: Acts xx. 7, "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them." So the Holy Ghost was careful that the public contributions should be on this day, in all the churches, rather than on any other day, as appears by our text.

12. The first day of the week is, in the New Testament, called THE LORD'S DAY; see Rev. i. 10. Some say, How do we know that that was the first day of the week? Every day is the Lord's day. But it is ridiculous so to talk. For the design of John is to tell us when he had those visions. And if by the Lord's day is meant any day, how doth that inform us when that event took place?

But what is meant by this expression we know, just in the same way as we know what is the meaning of any word in the original of the New Testament, or the meaning of any expression in an ancient language, viz., by what we find to be the universal signification of the expression in ancient times. This expression of THE LORD'S DAY is found, by the ancient use of the whole Christian church, by what appears in all the writings of ancient times, even from the apostles' days, to signify the first day of the week.

And the expression implies in it the holiness of the day. For doubtless the day is called the LORD'S DAY, as the sacred supper is called the LORD'S SUPPER, which is so called, because it is a holy supper, to be celebrated in remembrance

of the Lord Christ, and of his redemption. So this is a holy day, to be kept in remembrance of the Lord Christ, and his redemption.

The first day of the week, being in Scripture called the Lord's day, sufficiently makes it out to be the day of the week that is to be kept holy unto God; for God hath been pleased to call it by his own name. When God puts his name upon any thing, or any thing is called by the name of God in Scripture, this denotes the business of that thing and the appropriation of it to God." Thus God put his name upon his people Israel of old: "Numb. vi. 27, "And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel." They were called by the name of God, as it is said, 2 Chron. vii. 14, "If my people which *are called by my name*," &c.; i. e., they were called God's people, or the Lord's people. This denoted that they were a holy, peculiar people, above all others. Deut. vii. 6, "Thou art a holy people unto the Lord;" and so in verse 14, and many other places.

So the city Jerusalem was a city that was called by God's name: Jer. xxv. 29, "Upon the city which is called by my name." Daniel ix. 18, 19, "And the city which is called by thy name," &c. This denoted that that was a holy city, a city chosen of God above all other cities for holy uses, as it is often called the HOLY CITY, as in Nehem. xi. 1, "To dwell in Jerusalem the holy city;" and in many other places.

So the temple is said to be a house called by God's name: 1 Kings viii. 43, "This house that is called by my name." And often elsewhere. That is, it was called God's house, or the Lord's house. This denoted that it was called a holy place, a house devoted to holy uses, above all others.

So also we find that the first day of the week is called by God's name, being called in Scripture God's day, or the LORD'S day, which denotes that it is a holy day, a day appropriated to holy uses, above all others in the week.

13. The tradition of the church from age to age, though it be no rule, yet may be a great confirmation of the truth in such a case as this is. We find by all accounts, that it hath been the universal custom of the Christian church, in all ages, even from the age of the apostles, to keep the first day of the week. We read in the writings which remain of the first, second, and third centuries, of the Christians' keeping the Lord's day; and so in all succeeding ages; and there are no accounts that contradict them. This day hath all along been kept by Christians, in all countries throughout the world, and by almost all that have borne the name of Christians, of all denominations, however different in their opinions as to other things.

Now, although this be not sufficient of itself, without a foundation in Scripture; yet it may be a confirmation of it, because there is really matter of conviction in it to our reason. Reason may greatly confirm truths revealed in the Scriptures. The universality of the custom throughout all Christian countries, in all ages, by what account we have of them, is a good argument, that the church had it from the apostles; and it is difficult to conceive how all should come to agree to set up such a custom through the world, of different sects and opinions, and we have no account of any such thing.

14. It is no way weakening to these arguments, that there is nothing more plainly said about it in the New Testament, till John wrote his REVELATION, because there is a sufficient reason to be given for it. In all probability it was purposely avoided by the Holy Spirit, in the first settling of Christian churches in the world, both among the Heathen and among the Jews, but especially for the sake of the Jews, and out of tenderness to the Jewish Christians. For it is evident that Christ and the apostles declared one thing after another to them gradually as they could bear it.

The Jews had a regard for their Sabbath above almost any thing in the law of Moses; and there was that in the Old Testament which tended to uphold them in the obsevance of this, much more strongly than any thing else that was Jewish. God had made so much of it, had so solemnly, frequently, and carefully commanded it, and had often so dreadfully punished the breach of it, that there was more color for their retaining this custom than almost any other.

Therefore Christ dealt very tenderly with them in this point. Other things of this nature we find very gradually revealed. Christ had many things to say, as we are informed, which yet he said not, because they could not as yet bear them, and gave this reason for it, that it was like putting new wine into old bottles. They were so contrary to their old customs, that Christ was gradual in revealing them. He gave here a little and there a little, as they could bear; and it was a long time before he told them plainly the principal doctrines of the kingdom of heaven. He took the most favorable opportunities to tell them of his sufferings and death, especially when they were full of admiration at some signal miracle, and were confirmed in it, that he was the Messiah.

He told them many things much more plainly after his resurrection than before. But even then, he did not tell them all, but left more to be revealed by the Holy Ghost at Pentecost. They therefore were much more enlightened after that than before. However, as yet he did not reveal all. The abolition of the ceremonial law about meats and drinks was not fully known till after this.

The apostles were in the same manner careful and tender of those to whom they preached and wrote. It was very gradually that they ventured to teach them the cessation of the ceremonial laws of circumcision and abstinence from unclean meats. How tender is the Apostle Paul with such as scrupled, in the fourteenth chapter of Romans! He directs those who had knowledge to keep it to themselves, for the sake of their weak brethren, Rom. xiv. 22. But I need say no more to evince this.

However, I will say this, that it is very possible that the apostles themselves at first might not have this change of the day of the Sabbath fully revealed to them. The Holy Ghost, at his descent, revealed much to them, yet after that, they were ignorant of much of gospel doctrine; yea, they were so a great while after they acted the part of apostles, in preaching, baptizing and governing the church. Peter was surprised when he was commanded to eat meats legally unclean; so were the apostles in general, when Peter was commanded to go to the Gentiles, to preach to them.

Thus tender was Christ of the church while an infant. He did not feed them with strong meat, but was careful to bring in the observation of the Lord's day by degrees, and therefore took all occasions to honor it, by appearing from time to time of choice on that day, by sending down his Spirit on that day in that remarkable manner at Pentecost; by ordering Christians to meet in order to break bread on that day, and by ordering their contributions and other duties of worship to be holden on it; thus introducing the observation of it by degrees. And though as yet the Holy Ghost did not speak very plainly about it, yet God took special care that there should be sufficient evidences of his will, to be found out by the Christian church, when it should be more established and settled, and should have come to the strength of a man.

Thus I leave it with every one to judge, whether there be not sufficient evidence, that it is the mind and will of God, that the first day of the week should be kept by the Christian church as a Sabbath?

APPLICATION.

This shall be in a use of EXHORTATION.

1. Let us be thankful for the institution of the Christian Sabbath. It is a thing wherein God hath shown his mercy to us, and his care for our souls. He shows, that he, by his infinite wisdom, is contriving for our good, as Christ teaches us, that the Sabbath was made for man; Mark ii. 27: "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." It was made for the profit and for the comfort of our souls.

The Sabbath is a day of rest; God hath appointed that we should, every seventh day, rest from all our worldly labors. Instead of that, he might have appointed the hardest labors for us to go through, some severe hardships for us to endure. It is a day of outward, but especially of spiritual rest. It is a day appointed of God, that his people thereon may find rest unto their souls; that the souls of believers may rest and be refreshed in their Saviour. It is a day of rejoicing; God made it to be a joyful day to the church: Psalm cxviii. 24, "This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it." They that aright receive and improve the Sabbath, call it A DELIGHT and HONORABLE; it is a pleasant and a joyful day to them; it is an image of the future heavenly rest of the church. Heb. iv. 9, 10, 11, "There remaineth therefore a rest (or sabbatism, as it is in the original) to the people of God. For he that hath entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest."

The Christian Sabbath is one of the most precious enjoyments of the visible church. Christ showed his love to his church in instituting it; and it becomes the Christian church to be thankful to her Lord for it. The very name of this day, THE LORD'S DAY, or, JESUS' DAY, should endear it to Christians, as it intimates the special relation it has to Christ, and also the design of it, which is the commemoration of our dear Saviour, and his love to his church in redeeming it.

2. Be exhorted to keep this day holy. God hath given such evidences that this is his mind, that he will surely require it of you, if you do not strictly and conscientiously observe it. And if you do thus observe it, you may have this comfort in the reflection upon your conduct, that you have not been superstitious in it, but have done as God hath revealed it to be his mind and will in his word, that you should do; and that in so doing you are in the way of God's acceptance and reward.

Here let me lay before you the following MOTIVES to excite you to this duty.

(1.) By a strict observation of the Sabbath, the name of God is honored, and that in such a way as is very acceptable to him. Isa. lviii. 13, "If thou call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, and SHALT HONOR HIM." God is honored by it, as it is a visible manifestation of respect to God's holy law, and a reverencing of that which has a peculiar relation to God himself, and that more in some respects than the observation of many other commands. A man may be just, and may be generous, and yet not so plainly show respect to the revealed mind and will of God, as many of the Heathen have been so. But if a person, with evident strictness and care, observe the Sabbath, it is a visible manifestation of a conscientious regard to God's declaration of his mind, and so is a visible honor done to his authority.

By a strict observation of the Sabbath, the face of religion is kept up in the world. If it were not for the Sabbath, there would be but little public and visible appearance of serving, worshipping, and reverencing the supreme and invisible Being. The Sabbath seems to have been appointed very much for this

end, viz., to uphold the visibility of religion in public, or among professing societies of men; and by how much greater the strictness is with which the Sabbath is observed, and with how much more solemnity the duties of it are observed among a people; by so much the greater is the manifestation among them of respect to the divine Being.

This should be a powerful motive with us to the observation of the Sabbath. It should be our study above all things to honor and glorify God. It should be the great thing with all that bear the name of Christians, to honor their great God and King, and I hope is a great thing with many that hear me at this time. If this be your inquiry, if this be your desire, to honor God; by this subject you are directed to one way whereby you may do much in that way, viz., by honoring the Sabbath, and by showing a careful and strict observance of it.

(2.) That which is the business of the Subbath is the greatest business of our lives, viz., the business of religion. To serve and worship God is that for which we were made, and for which we had our being given us. Other business, which is of a secular nature, and on which we are wont to attend on week days, is but subordinate, and ought to be subservient to the higher purposes and ends of religion. Therefore surely we should not think much of devoting one seventh part of our time, to be wholly spent in this business, and to be set apart to exercise ourselves in the immediate duties of religion.

(3.) Let it be considered that all our time is God's, and therefore when he challenges of us one day in seven, he challenges his own; he doth not exceed his right; he would not have exceeded it, if he had challenged a far greater proportion of our time to be spent in his immediate service. But he hath mercifully considered our state, and our necessities here: and, as he hath consulted the good of our souls in appointing a seventh day for the immediate duties of religion, so he hath considered our outward necessities, and hath allowed us six days for attendance on our outward affairs. What unworthy treatment, therefore, will it be of God, if we refuse to allow him the seventh day!

(4.) As the Sabbath is a day which is especially set apart for religious exercises, so it is a day wherein God especially confers his grace and blessing. As God hath commanded us to set it apart to have converse with God, so God hath set it apart for himself to have converse with us. As God hath commanded us to observe the Sabbath, so God observes the Sabbath too. It is with respect to the Sabbath, as Solomon prayed that it might be with respect to the temple, 2 Chron. vi. 20. His eyes are open upon it: he stands ready then especially to hear prayers, to accept of religious services, to meet his people, to manifest himself to them on this day, to give his Holy Spirit and blessing to those who diligently and conscientiously sanctify it.

That we should sanctify the Sabbath, as we have observed, is according to God's institution. God in a sense observes his own institutions; i. e., is wont to cause them to be attended with a blessing. The institutions of God are his appointed means of grace, and with his institutions he hath promised his blessing. Exod. xx. 24, "In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee." For the same reason may we conclude, that God will meet his people and bless them, waiting upon him not only in appointed places, but at appointed times, and in all appointed ways. Christ hath promised, that where two or three are gathered together in his name, he will be in the midst of them, Matt. xviii. 20. One thing included in the expression, *in his name*, is, that it is by his appointment, and according to his institution.

God hath made it our duty, by his institution, to set apart this day for a special seeking of his grace and blessing. From which we may argue, that he

will be especially ready to confer his grace on those who thus seek it. If it be the day on which God requires us especially to seek him, we may argue, that it is a day on which especially he will be found. That God is ready on this day especially to bestow his blessing on them that keep it aright, is implied in that expression of *God's blessing the Sabbath day.* God hath not only hallowed the Sabbath day, but blessed it; he hath given his blessing to it, and will confer his blessing upon all the due observers of it. He hath hallowed it, or appointed that it be kept holy by us, and hath blessed it; he hath determined to give his blessing upon it.

So that here is great encouragement for us to keep holy the Sabbath, as we would seek God's grace and our own spiritual good. The Sabbath day is an accepted time, a day of salvation, a time wherein God especially loves to be sought, and loves to be found. The Lord Jesus Christ takes delight in his own day; he delights to honor it; he delights to meet with and manifest himself to his disciples on it, as he showed before his ascension, by appearing to them from time to time on this day. On this day he delights to give his Holy Spirit, as he intimated, by choosing it as the day on which to pour out the Spirit, in so remarkable a manner on the primitive church, and on which to give his Spirit to the Apostle John.

Of old God blessed the seventh day, or appointed it to be a day whereon especially he would bestow blessings on his people, as an expression of his own joyful remembrance of that day, and of the rest and refreshment which he had on it. Exod. xxxi. 16, 17, "Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath.—For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed." As princes give gifts on their birth days, on their marriage days, and the like; so God was wont to dispense spiritual gifts on the seventh day.

But how much more reason has Christ to bless the day of his resurrection, and to delight to honor it, and to confer his grace and blessed gifts on his people on this day. It was a day whereon Christ rested and was refreshed in a literal sense. It was a day of great refreshment and joy to Christ, being the day of his deliverance from the chains of death, the day of his finishing that great and difficult work of redemption, which had been upon his heart from all eternity; the day of his justification by the Father; the day of the beginning of his exaltation, and of the fulfilment of the promises of the Father; the day when he had eternal life, which he had purchased, put into his hands.—On this day Christ doth indeed delight to distribute gifts, and blessings, and joy, and happiness, and will delight to do the same to the end of the world.

O therefore, how well is it worth our while to improve this day, to call upon God and seek Jesus Christ on it! Let awakened sinners be stirred up by these things, to improve the Sabbath day, as they would lay themselves most in the way of the Spirit of God. Improve the Sabbath day to call upon God; for then he is near. Improve the Sabbath day for reading the holy Scriptures, and diligently attending his word preached; for then is the likeliest time to have the Spirit accompanying it. Let the saints who are desirous of growing in grace, and enjoying communion with Christ, improve the Sabbath in order to it.

(5.) The last motive which I shall mention, is the experience of the influence which a strict observation of the Sabbath has upon the whole of religion It may be observed, that in those places where the Sabbath is well kept, religion in general will be most flourishing; and that in those places where the Sabbath is not much taken notice of, and much is not made of it, there is no great matter of religion any way

Here I would give several directions in answer to this.

INQUIRY. How ought we to keep the Sabbath?

ANSWER 1. We ought to be exceedingly careful on this day to abstain from sin. Indeed, all breaches of the Sabbath are sinful; but we speak now of those things which are in themselves sinful, or sinful upon other accounts, besides that they are done upon the Sabbath. The Sabbath being holy time, it is especially defiled by the commission of sin. Sin by being committed on this day becomes the more exceeding sinful. We are required to abstain from sin at all times, but especially on holy time. The commission of immoralities on the Sabbath is the worst way of profaning it, that which most provokes God, and brings most guilt upon the souls of men.

How provoking must it be to God, when men do those things on that day which God has sanctified, and set apart to be spent in the immediate exercises of religion, which are not fit to be done on common days, which are impure and wicked whenever they are done!

Therefore, if any persons be guilty of any such wickedness as intemperance or any unclean actions, they do in a very horrid manner profane the Sabbath. Or if they be guilty of wickedness in speech, of talking profanely, or in an unclean and lascivious manner, or of talking against their neighbors, they do in a dreadful manner profane the Sabbath. Yet very commonly those who are used to such things on week days, have not a conscience to restrain them on the Sabbath. It is well if those that live in the indulgence of the lust of uncleanness on week days be not some way or other unclean on the Sabbath. They will be indulging the same lusts then; they will be indulging the same impure flames in their imaginations at least: and it is well if they keep clear while in the house of God, and while they pretend to be worshipping God. The unclean young man gives this account of himself, Prov. v. 14: "I was almost in an evil in the midst of the congregation and the assembly." So those who are addicted to an impure way of talking in the week time, have nothing to keep them from the same upon the Sabbath, when they meet together. But dreadfully is God provoked by such things.

We ought carefully to watch over our own hearts, and to avoid all sinful thoughts on the Sabbath. We ought to maintain such a reverence for the Sabbath, as to have a peculiar dread of sin, such as shall awe us to a very careful watch over ourselves.

2. We ought to be careful to abstain from all worldly concerns. The reason, as we have showed, why it is needful and proper that certain stated parts of time should be set apart to be devoted to religious exercises, is because the state of mankind is such in this world, that they are necessitated to exercise their minds, and employ their thoughts about secular matters. It is therefore convenient that there should be stated times, wherein all should be obliged to throw by all other concerns, that their minds may the more freely and with less entanglement, be engaged in religious and spiritual exercises.

We are therefore to do thus, or else we frustrate the very design of the institution of a Sabbath. We are strictly to abstain from being outwardly engaged in any worldly thing, either worldly business or recreations. We are to rest in remembrance of God's rest from the work of creation, and of Christ's rest from the work of redemption. We should be careful that we do not encroach upon the Sabbath at its beginning, by busying ourselves about the world after the Sabbath is begun. We should avoid talking about worldly matters, and even thinking about them; for whether we outwardly concern ourselves with the world or not, yet if our minds be upon it, we frustrate the end of the

Sabbath. The end of its separation from other days is, that our minds may be disengaged from worldly things; and we are to avoid being outwardly concerned with the world, only for this reason, that that cannot be without taking up our minds. We ought therefore to give the world no place in our thoughts on the Sabbath, but to abstract ourselves from all worldly concernment, and maintain a watch over ourselves, that the world do not encroach, as it is very apt to do, Isai. lviii. 13, 14.

3. We ought to spend the time in religious exercises. This is the more ultimate end of the Sabbath: we are to keep our minds separate from the world, principally for this end, that we may be the more free for religious exercises. Though it be a day of rest, yet it was not designed to be a day of idleness: to rest from worldly employments, without employing ourselves about any thing, is but to lay ourselves so much more in the devil's way. The mind will be employed some way or other; and therefore doubtless the end for which we are to call off our minds from worldly things on the Sabbath is, that we may employ them about things that are better.

We are to attend on spiritual exercises with the greatest diligence. That it is a day of rest, doth not hinder us in so doing; for we are to look on spiritual exercises but as the rest and refreshment of the soul. In heaven, where the people of God have the most perfect rest, they are not idle, but are employed in spiritual and heavenly exercises. We should take care therefore to employ our minds on a Sabbath day on spiritual objects by holy meditation; improving for our help therein the Holy Scriptures, and other books that are according to the word of God. We should also employ ourselves outwardly on this day in the duties of divine worship, in public and private. It is proper to be more frequent and abundant in secret duties on this day, than on other days, as we have time and opportunity, as well as to attend on public ordinances.

It is proper on this day, not only especially to promote the exercises of religion in ourselves, but also in others; to be assisting them, and endeavoring to promote their spiritual good, by religious conversation and conference. Especially those who have the care of others ought, on this day, to endeavor to promote their spiritual good: heads of families should be instructing and counselling their children, and quickening them in the ways of religion, and should see to it that the Sabbath be strictly kept in their houses. A peculiar blessing may be expected upon those families where there is due care taken that the Sabbath be strictly and devoutly observed.

4. We are on this day especially to meditate upon and celebrate the work of redemption. We are with special joy to remember the resurrection of Christ; because that was the finishing of the work of redemption: and this is the day whereon Christ rested and was refreshed, after he had endured those extreme labors which he had endured for our perishing souls. This was the day of the gladness of Christ's heart; it was the day of his deliverance from the chains of death, and also of our deliverance: for we are delivered in him who is our head. He, as it were, rose with his elect. He is the first fruits; those that are Christ's will follow.—Christ, when he rose, was justified as a public person, and we are justified in him. This is the day of our deliverance out of Egypt.

We should therefore meditate on this with joy; we should have a sympathy with Christ in his joy. He was refreshed on this day, we should be refreshed as those whose hearts are united with his. When Christ rejoices, it becomes all his church everywhere to rejoice. We are to say of this day, "This is the day that the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it."

But we are not only to commemorate the resurrection of Christ, but the

whole work of redemption, of which this was the finishing. We keep the day on which the work was finished, because it is in remembrance of the whole work. We should on this day contemplate the wonderful love of God and of Christ, as expressed in the work of redemption; and our remembrance of these things should be accompanied with suitable exercises of soul with respect to them. When we call to mind the love of Christ, it should be with a return of love on our part. When we commemorate this work, it should be with faith in the Saviour. And we should praise God and the Lamb for this work, for the divine glory and love manifested in it, in our private and public prayers, in talking of the wonderful works of God, and in singing divine songs.

Hence it is proper that Christ's disciples should choose this day to come together to break bread, or to celebrate the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, Acts xx. 7, because it is an ordinance instituted in remembrance of the work of redemption.

5. Works of mercy and charity are very proper and acceptable to Christ on this day. They were proper on the ancient Sabbath. Christ was wont to do such works on the Sabbath day. But they especially become the Christian Sabbath, because it is a day kept in commemoration of the greatest work of mercy and love towards us that ever was wrought. What can be more proper than that on such a day we should be expressing our love and mercy towards our fellow creatures, and especially our fellow Christians. Christ loves to see us show our thankfulness to him in such ways as these. Therefore, we find that the Holy Ghost was especially careful, that such works should be performed on the first day of the week in the primitive church, as we learn by our text.

SERMON XLII.

THE NATURE AND END OF EXCOMMUNICATION.

1 Corinthians v. 11.—But now I have written unto you, not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner: with such a one, no not to eat.

The church of Corinth, in primitive times, was very famous for the gifts and graces of the Spirit of God, as well as for the number of its members. This church was first planted by the Apostle Paul: he was, as it were, the spiritual father of it, who had converted its members from Heathenism to Christianity; as he reminds them in these epistles: 1 Cor. iv. 15, "For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers. For in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel." We have an account of the apostle's planting this church in the 18th chapter of Acts.

It was doubtless excellently regulated by him, when he was present to have an immediate inspection of its affairs. But in his absence many corruptions and disorders crept in among its members. Among other disorders, one of the members had been guilty of a very heinous kind of wickedness: he had committed incest in one of the grossest degrees of it, in having his father's wife; which the apostle observes was infamous even among the Heathens. And the church of Corinth had tolerated him in it, so as notwithstanding to suffer him to continue in their communion.

The chapter of which our text is a part, is wholly upon this subject. The apostle reproves the church for conniving at this wickedness, as they had done in not excommunicating the person who had been guilty of it; and directs them speedily to cast him out from among them; thus delivering him to Satan. He orders them to purge out such scandalous persons, as the Jews were wont to purge leaven out of their houses when they kept the passover.

In the text and two foregoing verses he more particularly explains their duty with respect to such vicious persons, and enjoins it on them not to keep company with such. But then shows the difference they ought to observe in their carriage towards those who were vicious among the Heathen, who had never joined with the church, and towards those of the same vicious character who had been their professed brethren; see verses 9—12: "I wrote unto you, not to company with fornicators. Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you, not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner: with such a one, no not to eat."

In the words of the text we may observe two things, viz., the duty, and the object.

I. The duty enjoined, of which two things are expressed.

1. The behavior required, negatively expressed, *not to keep company.*

2. The manner or degree, *no not to eat.*

II. The object, who is designed by two things.

1. That he appear to be vicious; a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner We are not to understand only

these particular vices, but these, or any other gross sins, or whatever carries in it visible wickedness. It is evident, that the apostle here, and in the context, intends that we should exclude out of our company all those who are visibly wicked men. For in the foregoing verses he expresses his meaning by this, that we should purge out the old leaven; and, explaining what he means by leaven, he includes all visible wickedness, as in verse 8: "Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

2. The other thing by which the object of this behavior or dealing is characterized, is, that he be one that is called a brother, or one that hath been a professed Christian, and a member of the church.

DOCTRINE

Those members of the visible Christian church that are become visibly wicked, ought not to be tolerated in the church, but should be excommunicated.

In handling this subject, I shall speak,

I. of the nature of excommunication;

II. Of the subject; and,

III. Of the ends of it.

I. I shall say something of the nature of excommunication. It is a punishment executed in the name and according to the will of Christ, whereby a person who hath heretofore enjoyed the privileges of a member of the visible church of Christ, is cast out of the church and delivered unto Satan.

It is of the nature of a punishment inflicted: it is expressly called a punishment by the apostle in 2 Cor. ii. 6: speaking of the excommunicated Corinthian, he says, "Sufficient to such a man is this punishment." For though it be not designed by man for the destruction of the person who is the subject of it, but for his correction, and so is of the nature of a castigatory punishment, at least so far as it is a punishment inflicted by men; yet it is in itself a great and dreadful calamity, and the most severe punishment that Christ hath appointed in the visible church. Although in it the church is to seek only the good of the person and his recovery from sin, there appearing, upon proper trial, no reason to hope for his recovery by gentler means; yet it is at God's sovereign disposal, whether it shall issue in his humiliation and repentance, or in his dreadful and eternal destruction; as it always doth issue in the one or the other.

In the definition of excommunication now given, two things are chiefly worthy of consideration. 1. Wherein this punishment consists. 2. By whom it is inflicted.

First, I would show wherein this punishment consists; and it is observable that there is in it something privative, and something positive.

First, There is something privative in excommunication, which consists in being deprived of a benefit heretofore enjoyed. This part of the punishment is in Scripture expressed by being *cast out of the church.* So this punishment in the Jewish church was called putting out of the synagogue, John xvi. 2. The word synagogue is a word of the same signification as the word church. So this punishment in the Christian church is called casting out of the church. The Apostle John, blaming Diotrephes for inflicting this punishment without cause, says, 3 John v. 10, "He casteth them out of the church."

This privative part of the punishment is sometimes expressed by the church's withdrawing from a member: 2 Thes. iii. 6, "Now we command you, brethren,

in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ye *withdraw* yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly."

The privative part of the punishment of excommunication consists in this, viz., in being cut off from the enjoyment of the privileges of God's visible people. The whole world of mankind is divided into these two sorts, those that are God's visible people, and so are within the visible church of Christ; and those that are without the visible church, and are of the visible kingdom of Satan. Now it is a great privilege to be one of the visible people of God, to be within the visible church of Christ, and to enjoy the benefits of such: it is abundantly so spoken of in Scripture. On the other hand, it is very doleful to be without this visible kingdom, or to be cut off from the privileges of it, and to be excluded, as those who are to be treated as belonging to the visible kingdom of Satan.

The privileges which are to be enjoyed in the visible church of Christ, from which excommunicated persons are to be cut off, are of these four kinds:

1. The charity of the church.
2. Brotherly society with the members of the church.
3. The fellowship of the church in worship.
4. The internal privileges of visible Christians.

1. They are cut off from being the objects of that charity of God's people which is due to Christian brethren. They are not indeed cut off from all the charity of God's people, for all men ought to be the objects of their love. There is a love due from the people of God even to the Heathens and others who are not in the visible church of Christ. Our love should be like that of our heavenly Father, who is kind to the evil and the good. But I speak of the brotherly charity due to visible saints.

Charity, as the apostle represents it, is as it were the bond by which the several members of the church of Christ are united together; and therefore he calls it the bond of perfectness: Col. iii. 14, "Put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness." But when a person is justly excommunicated, it is like a physician's cutting off a diseased member from the body; and then the bond which before united it to the body is cut or broken.

A scandal is the same as a stumbling-block; and when a member of the visible church is guilty of scandal, a stumbling-block is laid before others in two respects.

(1.) It is a dishonor to God, a bad example, and a stumbling-block, as it is the occasion of others falling into sin.

(2.) It is a stumbling-block in the way of the charity of his fellow Christians towards the offender. As long therefore as the scandal remains, it stumbles the charity of others: and if it finally remains after proper endeavors to remove it, then it breaks their charity, and so the offender is cut off from the charity of the church.

He is cut off from the charity of the church in the following respects:

[1.] As he is cut off from the charitable opinion and esteem of the church; so that the church cannot any longer look upon him as a Christian, and so rejects him; therefore excommunication is called a rejection: Tit. iii. 10, "A man that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject." This implies that the church doth not approve, or that it disapproves the person as a Christian: it cannot any longer charitably look upon him as a saint, or fellow worshipper of God, and can do no other than, on the contrary, esteem him an enemy of God; and so doth openly withdraw its charity from him, ceasing to acknowledge him as a fellow Christian, or fellow worshipper of God,

and henceforward treating him as no more a fellow worshipper than the Heathens.

[2.] The person excommunicated is also cut off from that honor which is due to brethren and fellow Christians. To be a visible Christian is an honorable character, and much honor is due to persons of this character. But excommunicated persons forfeit this honor. Christians ought not to pay that honor and respect to them which they pay to others; but should treat them as unworthy of such honor, that they may be ashamed. Christ tells us, that they should "be unto us as Heathen men and publicans," (Matt. xviii. 17,) which implies a withdrawing from them that common respect and honor which we pay to others. There doubtless, therefore, should be a great difference between the respect that we show such, and that which we show others: we ought to treat them so as to let them plainly see that we do not count them worthy of it, and so as tends to put them to shame.

[3.] They ought to be cut off from that brotherly complacence that is due to Christian brethren. Much love and complacency is due to those who are visible Christians, or to those whom we are obliged in charity to receive as saints; and on this account, because they are visible Christians. But this complacence excommunicated persons forfeit.

The love of benevolence or of good will is indeed still due to them, as it is to the visibly wicked: we should still wish well to them, and seek their good. Excommunication itself is to be performed as an act of benevolence or good will: we should seek their good by it; and it is to be used as a means of their eternal salvation. But complacence and delight in them as visible Christians is to be withdrawn; and on the contrary they are to be the objects of displacency and abhorrence. When they are excommunicated they are avoided and rejected with abhorrence, as visibly and apparently wicked. We are to cast them out as an unclean thing which defiles the church of God.

In this sense the Psalmist professes a hatred of those who were the visible enemies of God. Psal. cxxxix. 21, 22: "Do I not hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? And am I not grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred." Not that he hated them with a hatred of malice or ill will, but with displacency and abhorrence of their wickedness. In this respect we ought to be the children of our Father who is in heaven, who, though he loves many wicked men with a love of benevolence, yet cannot love them with a love of complacence. Thus excommunicated persons are cut off from the charity of the church.

2. They are cut off from the society which Christians have together as brethren. I speak now of the common society which Christian brethren have together. Thus we are commanded to *withdraw* from such; 2 Thes. iii. 6. To *avoid* them; Rom. xvi. 17 To *have no company* with them; 2 Thess. iii. 14. And to *treat them as Heathens and publicans;* Matt. xviii. 17. The people of God are not only to avoid society with visibly wicked men in sacred things; but when excommunicated, as much as may be to avoid and withdraw from them as to that common society which is proper to subsist among Christians.

Not that they should avoid speaking to them on any occasion. All manner and all degrees of society are not forbidden; but all unnecessary society, all such society as holds forth complacence in them, or such as is wont to be among those that delight in the company of one another. We should not associate ourselves with them so as to make them our companions. Yea, there ought to be such an avoiding of their company as shall show great dislike, or such as there is wont to be between persons who very much dislike each other.

Particularly, we are forbidden such a degree of society, or appearance of associating ourselves with them, as there is in making them our guests at our tables, or in being their guests at their tables; as is manifest in the text, where we are commanded to have no company with them, *no not to eat.* That this respects not eating with them at the Lord's Supper, but a common eating, is evident by two things.

(1.) It is evident by the words, that this eating here forbidden, is one of the lowest degrees of keeping company, which are forbidden. Keep no company with such a one, saith the apostle, *no not to eat.* As much as to say, no not in so low a degree as to eat with him. But this would be a ridiculous sort of language for eating with him at the Lord's Supper, which is the very highest degree of visible Christian communion. Who can suppose that the apostle would speak such nonsense as this, Take heed and have no company with a man, no not so much as in the highest degree of communion that you can have?

(2.) The apostle mentions this eating as a way of keeping company which they might not hold with an excommunicated brother, which however they might hold with the Heathen. He tells them, not to keep company with fornicators; then he informs them, he means not with the fornicators of this world, that is, the Heathens; but, saith he, "if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, &c., with such a one keep no company, *no not to eat.*" This makes it most apparent, that the apostle doth not mean eating at the Lord's table; for so they might not keep company with the fornicators of the Heathens any more than with an excommunicated person.

Here naturally arise two questions.

QUESTION 1. How far are the church to treat excommunicated persons as they would treat the Heathens, or those who never have been of the visible church? I answer, they are to treat them as Heathens, excepting in these two things, in which there is a difference to be observed.

(1.) They are to have a greater concern for their welfare still than if they had never been brethren, and therefore ought to take more pains, by admonitions and otherwise, to reclaim and save them, than they are obliged to take towards those who have been always Heathens. This seems manifest by that of the apostle, "2 Thess. iii. 14, 15: "And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." The consideration that he hath been a brother heretofore, and that we have not so finally cast him off from that relation, but that we are still hoping and using means for his recovery, obliges us to concern ourselves more for the good of his soul than for those with whom we never had any such connection; and so to pray for him, and to take pains with him by admonishing him.

The very reason of the thing shows the same. For this very ordinance of excommunication is used for this end, that we may thereby obtain the good of the person excommunicated. And surely we should be more concerned for the good of those who have been our brethren, and who are now under the operation of means used by us for their good, than for those with whom we never had any special connection. Thus there should be more of the love of benevolence exercised towards persons excommunicated, than towards those who never were members of the church.

But then,

(2.) On the other hand, as to what relates to the love of complacence, they ought to be treated with greater displacency and disrespect than the Heathen. This is plain by the text and context. For the apostle plainly doth not require

of us to avoid the company of the Heathen, or the fornicators of the world, but doth expressly require us to avoid the company of any brother who shall be guilty of any of the vices pointed out in the text, or any other like vice, and therefore be excommunicated.

This is also plain by the reason of the thing. For those who have once been visible Christians and have apostatized and cast off that visibility, deserve to be treated with more abhorrence than those who have never made any pretensions to Christianity. The sin of such in apostatizing from their profession is more aggravated than the sin of those who never made any profession. They far more dishonor religion, and are much more abhorred of God. Therefore when Christ says, Matt. xviii. 17, "Let him be unto thee as a Heathen man and a publican," it is not meant that we should treat an excommunicated brother as Christians ought to treat Heathens and publicans; for they might eat with them, as Christ himself did; and the apostle gives leave to eat with such, 1 Cor. x. 27; and in the context gives leave to keep company with such; yet forbids to eat with an excommunicated person.

Christ's meaning must be, that we should treat an excommunicated person, as the Jews were wont to treat the Heathens and publicans; and as the disciples had been always taught among the Jews, and brought up, and used to treat them. They would by no means eat with publicans and sinners; they would not eat with the Gentiles, or with the Samaritans. Therefore Peter durst not eat with the Gentiles when the Jews were present, Gal. ii. 12.

Question 2. What kindness and respect may and ought to be shown to such persons?

(1.) There are some things by which the members of the church are obliged to show kindness to them; and these things are chiefly two, to pray for them, and to admonish them.

(2.) The common duties and offices of humanity ought to be performed towards them; such as relieving them when they are sick, or under any other distress; allowing them those benefits of human society, and that help, which are needful for the support and defence of their lives and property.

(3.) The duties of natural and civil relations are still to be performed towards them. Excommunication doth not release children from the obligation of duty to their parents, nor parents from parental affection and care towards their children. Nor are husbands and wives released from the duties proper to their relation. And so of all other less relations, whether natural, domestic, or civil.

3. They are cut off from the fellowship of the worship of the Christian church. The true notion of the visible church of Christ, is that part of mankind, which, as his people, is united in his worship, or which agrees in upholding his appointed worship. And the notion of a particular visible church of Christ, is a particular society of worshippers, or of visible saints, united for the social worship of God according to his institutions or ordinances. One great and main privilege then, which the members of such a church enjoy, is fellowship in the worship which God hath appointed in his church. But they that are excommunicated are cut off from this privilege, they have no fellowship, no communion with the people of God in any part of their worship. They can have no fellowship with them in baptism, or the Lord's Supper, or in the prayers which they offer up, or in the praises which they sing.

He that is the mouth of the worshipping congregation in offering up public prayers, is not the mouth of those who are excommunicated. He is the mouth only of the worshipping society; but they are cast out of that society. The

church may and ought to pray for such; but they cannot have fellowship with such in prayer. The minister, when speaking in prayer, ought to pray for those that are shut out of the society of God's visible servants or worshippers; but he doth not speak in their name. He speaks only in the name of the united society of visible saints or worshippers. If the people of God were to put up prayers in their name, it would imply a receiving of them into charity, or that they charitably looked upon them, and received them as the servants or worshippers of God. But, as was observed before, excommunicated persons are in this respect cast out of the charity of the church, and the church hath no longer charity for them, as the servants or worshippers of God; but looks upon them as wicked men and enemies of God, and treats them as such.

So when a congregation of visible saints join in singing the praises of God, as the Psalmist says, Psalm xxxiv. 3, "Let us extol his name together;" they do it only as joining with those that are in their charity to be looked upon as fellow servants and fellow worshippers of God. They do it not as joining with Heathens; nor do the people of God say to the open enemies of God, remaining such, "Come let us extol his name together;" but they say it to their brethren in God's service. If we ought not to join with excommunicated persons in familiar society, much less ought we to hold fellowship with them in solemn worship.

4. There are privileges of a more internal nature, which those who are members of the visible church enjoy, from which excommunicated persons are cut off. They being God's covenant people, are in the way of covenant blessings; and therefore have more encouragement to come to God by prayer for any mercy they need. The visible church is the people among whom God hath set his tabernacle, and among whom he is wont to bestow his blessings. But they that are excommunicated are in a sense cast out of God's sight, or from God's face, into a land of banishment, as Cain was; Gen. iv. 14, 16. They are not in the way of those smiles of Providence, those tokens of God's favor, and that light of God's countenance, which those who are within are in the way of. Nor, as they are cast out from among God's covenant people, have they the divine covenant to plead, as the members of the church have.

Thus far I have considered the privative part of the punishment of excommunication.

I now proceed,

Secondly, To the positive part, which is expressed by being delivered to Satan, in verse 5, of the context. By which two things seem to be signified.

1. A being delivered over to the calamities to which they are subject who belong to the visible kingdom of the devil. As they who are excommunicated are thrust out from among the visible people of God; so doubtless they are to be looked upon, in most respects at least, as being in the miserable, deplorable circumstances in which those who are under the visible tyranny of the devil, as the Heathens are. And in many respects they, doubtless, suffer the cruel tyranny of the devil, in a manner agreeable to the condition they are in, being cast out into his visible kingdom.

2. It is reasonable to suppose that God is wont to make the devil the instrument of those peculiar, severe chastisements which their apostasy deserves. As they deserve more severe chastisement than the Heathens, and are delivered to Satan for the destruction of the flesh; so we may well suppose, either that God is wont to let Satan loose, sorely to molest them outwardly or inwardly, and by such severe means to destroy the flesh, and to humble them; or that he suffers the devil to take possession of them, dreadfully to harden them, and so

to destroy them forever. For although what men are to aim at, is only the destruction of the flesh; yet whether it shall prove the destruction of the flesh, or the eternal and more dreadful destruction of them, is at God's sovereign disposal.—So much for the nature of excommunication.

SECONDLY, I come to show by whom this punishment is to be looked on as being inflicted.

1. When it is regularly and duly inflicted, it is to be looked upon as done by Christ himself. That is imported in the definition, that it is according to his will, and to the directions given in his word. And therefore he is to be looked upon as principal in it, and we ought to esteem it to be as really and truly from him, as if he were on earth, and personally inflicted it.

2. As it is inflicted by men, it is only done ministerially. They do not act of themselves in this, any more than in preaching the word. When the word is preached, it is the word of Christ which is spoken, as the speaker speaks in the name of Christ, as his ambassador. So, when a church excommunicates a member, the church acts in the name of Christ, and by his authority, not by its own. It is governed by his will, not by its own. Indeed it is only a particular application of the word of Christ.

Therefore it is promised, that when it is duly done, it shall be confirmed in heaven; i. e., Christ will confirm it, by acknowledging it to be his own act; and he will, in his future providence, have regard to what is done thus as done by himself: he will look on the person, and treat him as cast out and delivered to Satan by himself; and if he repent not, will for ever reject and damn him: Matt. xviii. 18, "Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven;" John xx. 23, "Whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained."

I shall now, as was proposed,

II. Endeavor to show who are the proper subjects of excommunication. They are those members of the church who are now become visibly wicked. Visibly wicked persons ought not to be tolerated in the church, but should be cast out, as the very name and nature of the visible church show, which is a society of visible saints, or visibly holy persons. When any of those visible saints become visibly wicked men, they ought to be cast out of the church. Now, the members of the church become visibly wicked by these two things:

1. By gross sin. Saints may be guilty of other sins, and very often are, without throwing any just stumbling-block in the way of public charity, or of the charity of their Christian brethren. The common failures of humanity, and the daily short comings of the best of men, do not ordinarily stumble the charity of their brethren; but when they fall into any gross sin, this effect follows; for we naturally argue, that he who hath committed some gross sin hath doubtless much more practised less and more secret sins; and so we doubt concerning the soundness and sincerity of his heart. Therefore all those who commit any gross sin, as they stumble the charity of their brethren, are proper subjects of discipline; and unless they confess their sin, and manifest their repentance, are proper subjects of excommunication. This leads me to say,

2. That the members of the church do especially become visibly wicked, when they remain impenitent in their sins, after proper means used to reclaim them. Merely being guilty of gross sin, is a stumbling-block to charity, unless repentance immediately succeed; but especially when the guilty person remains obstinate and contumacious; in such a case he is most clearly a visibly wicked person, and therefore to be dealt with as such; to be cast out into the wicked world, the kingdom of Satan, where he appears to belong.

Nor is contumacy in gross sins only a sufficient ground of excommunication. In the text the apostle commands us to inflict this censure, not only on those who are guilty of the gross sins of fornication, idolatry, and drunkenness, but also on those who are guilty of covetousness, railing, and extortion, which, at least in some degrees of them, are generally esteemed no very heinous crimes. And in Rom. xvi. 17, the same apostle commands the church to excommunicate "them who cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine they had learned;" and in 2 Thess. iii. 14, to excommunicate every one who should "not obey his word by that epistle." Now, according to these precepts, every one who doth not observe the doctrine of the apostles, and their word contained in their epistles, and so, by parity of reason, the divine instructions contained in the other parts of Scripture, is to be excommunicated, provided he continue impenitent and contumacious. So that contumacy and impenitence in any real and manifest sin whatsoever, deserve excommunication.

III. I come at length to speak of the ends of this ecclesiastical censure. The special ends of it are these three:

1. That the church may be kept pure, and the ordinances of God not be defiled. This end is mentioned in the context, verse 6, &c., "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

When the church and the ordinances of God are defiled by the toleration of wicked men in the church, God the Father, Jesus Christ the head and founder of the church, the religion of the gospel, and the church itself, are dishonored and exposed to contempt.

That the other members themselves may not be defiled, it is necessary that they bear a testimony against sin, by censuring it whenever it appears among them, especially in the grosser acts of wickedness. If they neglect so to do, they contract guilt by the very neglect; and not only so, but they expose themselves to learn the same vices which they tolerate in others; for "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." Hence that earnest caution of the apostle, Heb. xii. 15, "looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up, trouble you, and thereby many BE DEFILED."

2. That others may be deterred from wickedness. As the neglect of proper censure with respect to visibly wicked church members, tends to lead and encourage others to commit the same wickedness; so the infliction of proper censure tends to restrain others, not only from the same wickedness, but from sin in general. This, therefore, is repeatedly mentioned as one end of the punishments appointed to be inflicted by the law of Moses: Deut. xiii. 11, "And all Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall do no more such wickedness as this is among you."

3. That the persons themselves may be reclaimed, and that their souls may be saved. When other more gentle means have been used in vain, then it is the duty of the church to use this, which is more severe, in order to bring them to conviction, shame, and humiliation; and that, by being rejected and avoided by the church, and treated with disrespect, they may be convinced how they deserve to be forever disowned of God; that by being delivered unto Satan, they may learn how they deserve forever to be delivered up to him; that by his being made the instrument of their chastisement, they may learn how they deserve to be tormented by him, without any rest day or night, forever and ever.

This with the counsels and admonitions by which it is to be followed, is the last means that the church is to use, in order to reclaim those members which are become visibly wicked. If this be ineffectual, what is next to be expected, is destruction without remedy.

APPLICATION.

I shall apply this subject in a brief use of exhortation to this church, to maintain strictly the proper discipline of the gospel in general, and particularly that part of it which consists in excommunication. To this end I shall just suggest to you the following motives.

1. That if you tolerate visible wickedness in your members, you will greatly dishonor God, our Lord Jesus Christ, the religion which you profess, the church in general, and yourselves in particular. As those members of the church that practise wickedness themselves, bring dishonor upon all these, so do those who tolerate them in it. The language of it is, that God doth not require holiness in his servants; that Christ doth not require it in his disciples; that the religion of the gospel is not a holy religion; that the church is not a body of holy servants of God; and that this church in particular, hath no regard to holiness or true virtue.

2. Your own good loudly calls you to the same thing. From what hath been already said, you see how liable you, as individuals, will be to catch the contagion, which is easily communicated by reason of the natural depravity, in a degree at least remaining in the best of men.

Besides, if strict discipline be maintained among you, it will not only tend to prevent the spread of wickedness, but to make you more fruitful in holiness. If you know that the eyes of your brethren observe all your conduct, it will not only make you more guarded against sin, but more careful "to maintain good works," and to abound in "the fruits of the Spirit." Thus you will have more abundant joy and peace in believing.

3. The good of those who are without should be another motive. What the apostle saith with reference to another object, in 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25, is perfectly applicable to the case before us: "But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all; and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth." If strict discipline, and thereby strict morals, were maintained in the church, it would, in all probability, be one of the most powerful means of conviction and conversion towards those who are without.

4. Benevolence towards your offending brethren themselves calls upon you to maintain discipline in all its parts. Surely, if we love our brethren, it will grieve us to see them wandering from the path of truth and duty; and in proportion as our compassion is moved, shall we be disposed to use all proper means to reclaim and bring them back to the right way. Now, the rules of discipline contained in the gospel are the most proper, and best adapted to this end, that infinite wisdom itself could devise. Even excommunication is instituted for this very end, *the destruction of the flesh*, and *the salvation of the spirit*. If, therefore, we have any love to our offending and erring brethren, it becomes us to manifest it, in executing strictly the rules of gospel discipline, and even excommunication itself, whenever it is necessary.

5. But the absolute authority of Christ ought to be sufficient in this case, if there were no other motive. Our text is only one of many passages in the

Scripture, wherein strict discipline is expressly commanded, and peremptorily enjoined. Now, how can you be the true disciples of Christ, if you live in the neglect of these plain, positive commands? "If ye love me," saith Christ, "keep my commandments;" and, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I have commanded you." But, "He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings," "And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" If you strictly follow the rules of discipline instituted by Christ, you have reason to hope for his blessing; for he is wont to bless his own institutions, and to smile upon the means of grace which he hath appointed.

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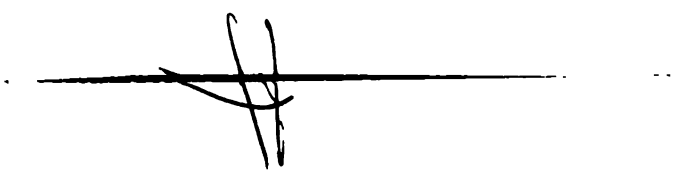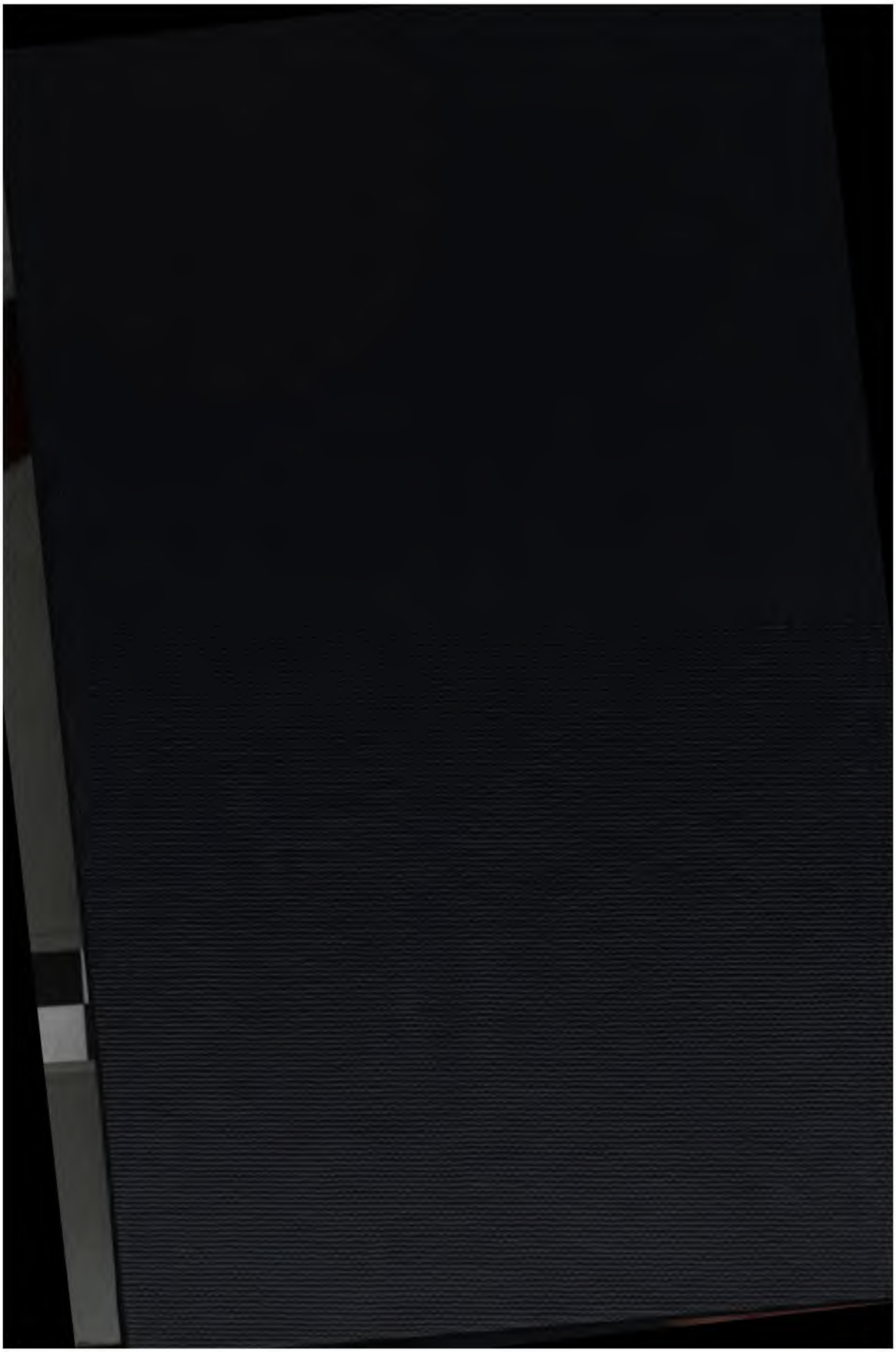
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